

# HISTORY of WAR



**TONY ROBINSON**  
TALKS GREAT BATTLES

## BATTLE OF BRITAIN'S UNSUNG HEROES

How RAF ground crews paid the price to keep the Few flying

**1918: THE FINAL PUSH**  
The USA's learning curve on the Hindenburg Line

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## DEFYING HITLER THE FACE OF RUSSIAN RESISTANCE



**BATTLE OF CRÉCY**  
Brutal tactics of England's against-the-odds triumph


**WAR OF 1812**  
Why Atlantic trade disputes turned to bloody carnage

**PLUS:**  
Hayreddin Barbarossa  
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# Welcome

*Member of RAF ground crew relaxing in shade of the wing of a Hurricane fighter plane in between sorties during the Battle of Britain*



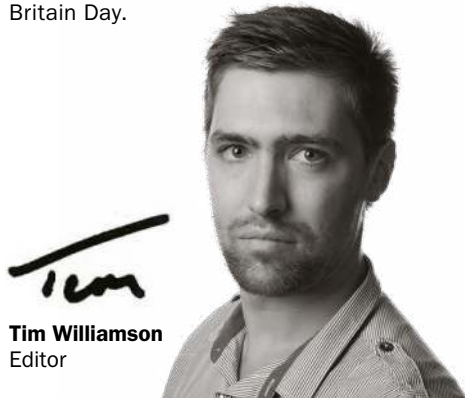
Image: Getty

**A**lthough the heroic 'Few' honoured in Churchill's famous speech have rightly deserved the decades of laudation since 1940, this has arguably sidelined the significant contribution of the forgotten 'many' who supported them.

**History Of War** issue 59 explores how the RAF's ground crews and auxiliary forces kept Fighter Command's pilots in the air, forming a vital support network during perilous dogfights with the Luftwaffe.

Thousands of mechanics, observers, firefighters and the brave ranks of the Women's

Auxiliary Air Force contributed to the defence of the UK. All were crucial in the climactic victory on 15 September – now annually commemorated as Battle of Britain Day.



**Tim Williamson**  
Editor

## CONTRIBUTORS

### TOM GARNER

This month Tom spoke with Sir Tony Robinson (p. 84) on the importance of battles in our history, and Tom gives a thrilling account of one such clash in this issue's Great Battles – Edward III's victory at Crécy (p. 52).



### PROFESSOR WILLIAM PHILPOTT

Concluding his series on the Hundred Days Offensive, Professor Philpott describes the last push towards defeating Imperial Germany and how British, French and American troops triumphed in the final campaign of WWI (p. 60)



### STUART HADAWAY

RAF researcher Stuart uncovers the neglected story of the brave ground crews and auxiliary forces that served during the Battle of Britain. He explores how even the General Post Office provided vital support for the final victory (p. 26).



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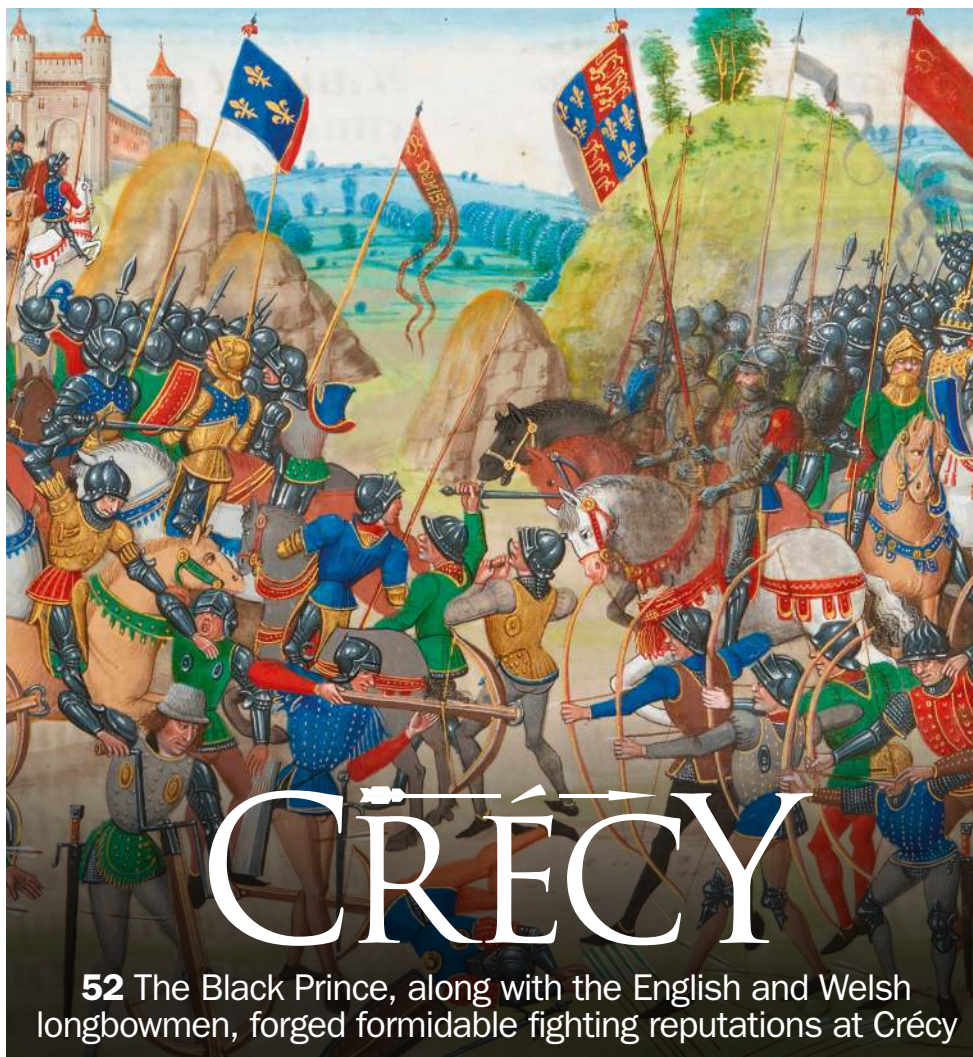
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A casualty from the Battle of Visby



## **WAR**<sub>in</sub> **FOCUS**

### **FROM BERLIN TO PARIS**

*Taken: 23 June 1940*

Adolf Hitler and senior members of the Nazi leadership in Paris, during the führer's one and only visit to the city. During the occupation, a French resistance member scaled the Eiffel Tower and unfurled a tricolour. In 1944, as the Allies approached the capital, Hitler ordered the Eiffel Tower and the rest of the city to be demolished.





## **WAR**<sup>in</sup> **FOCUS**

### **BEHIND EVERY GREAT GUN IS A GREAT WOMAN**

*Taken: c. 1942*

Factory workers manufacturing six-pounder guns in a British Ministry of Supply Royal Ordnance Factory. Anti-tank crews in North Africa were deployed with six-pounders from around 1942, and the improvement on the two-pounder guns was noticeable almost immediately.



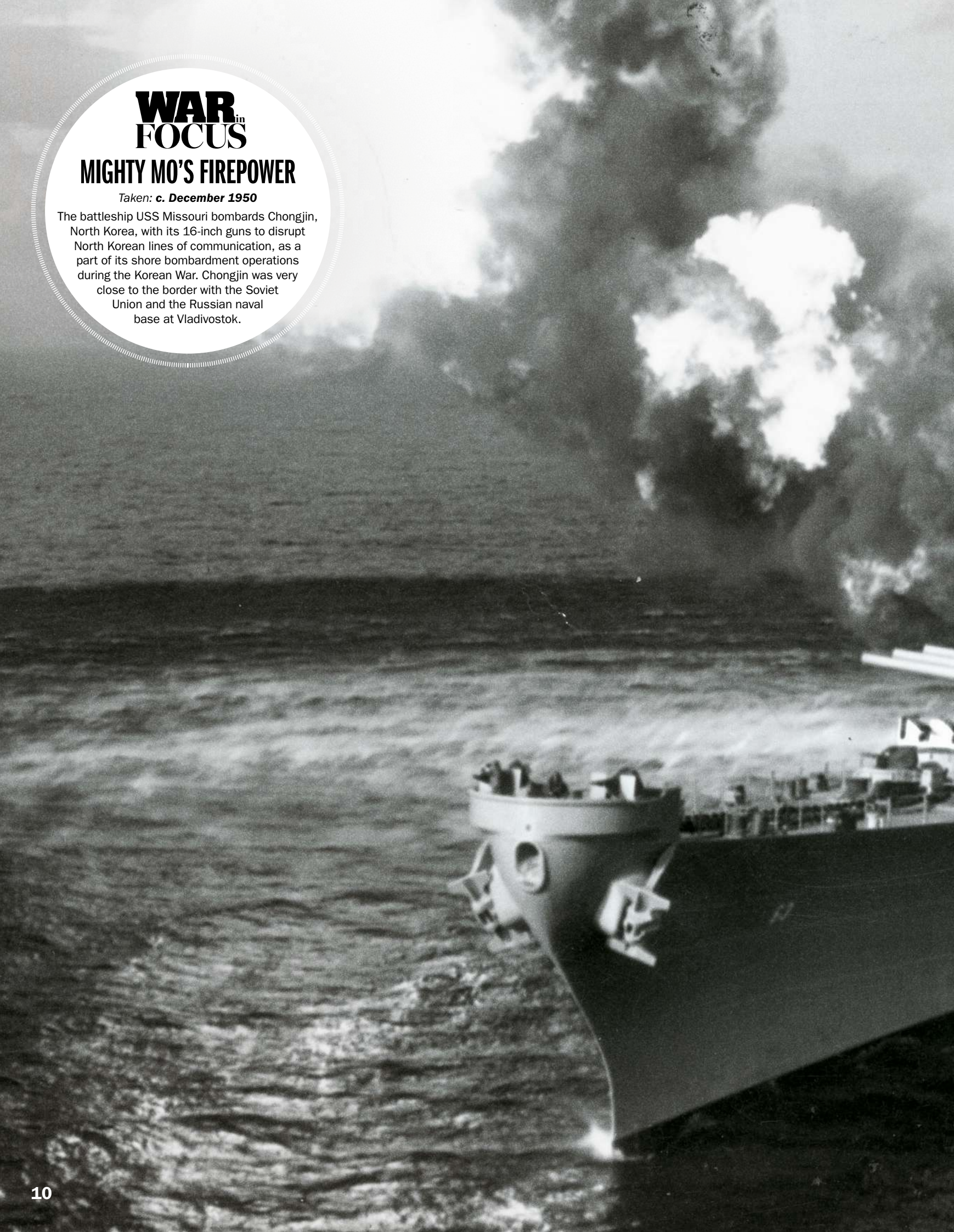


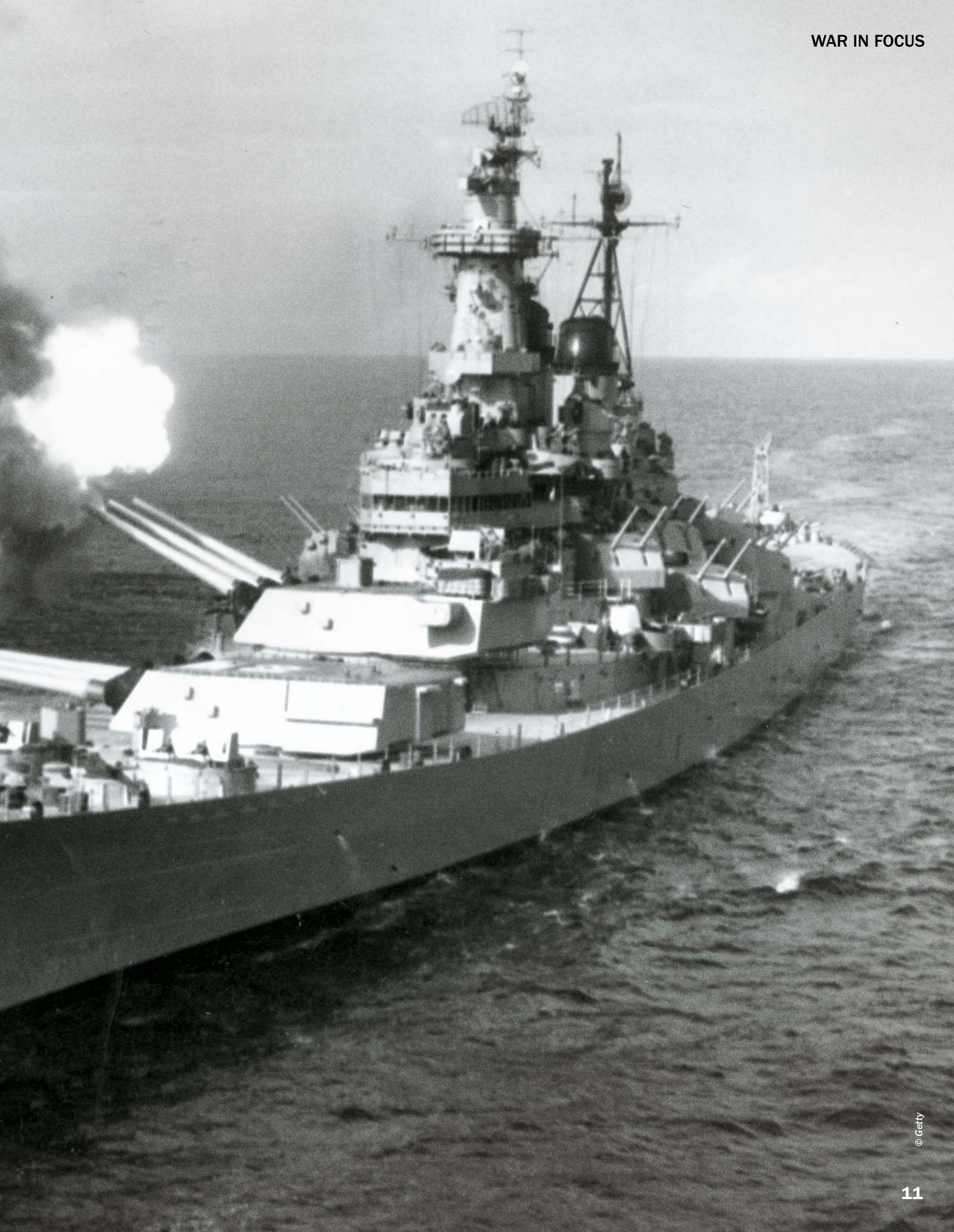
# WAR<sup>in</sup> FOCUS

## MIGHTY MO'S FIREPOWER

*Taken: c. December 1950*

The battleship USS Missouri bombards Chongjin, North Korea, with its 16-inch guns to disrupt North Korean lines of communication, as a part of its shore bombardment operations during the Korean War. Chongjin was very close to the border with the Soviet Union and the Russian naval base at Vladivostok.







**WAR**<sub>in</sub>  
**FOCUS**  
**'RACE OF HEROES'**

*Taken: 14 May 2016*

The crew of a T-80 tank performs during a Russian sports event called 'Race of heroes'. Held annually since 2013, the military contest consists of a race along an extreme ten-kilometre cross-country obstacle course. Personnel compete in platoons to finish the course in the fastest time, while being serenaded by blank firing from tanks and other vehicles.



TIMELINE OF THE...

# WAR OF 1812

Although the British won the Battle of Queenston Heights, their commander, Major General Sir Isaac Brock, was mortally wounded. He exhorted his troops forward, crying, "Push on, brave York Volunteers!"



Britain & the United States fought a dramatic but inconclusive conflict that witnessed the burning of Washington, DC & failed American invasions of Canada

## BATTLE OF QUEENSTON HEIGHTS

British and Canadian militiamen (along with First Nation allies) defeat an invading American army on the Niagara Escarpment in the first major battle of the war. The Americans intend to invade Upper Canada, but the battle proves to the British that the Canadians will resist a US occupation.

1803-1812

## FROM PRESS GANGS TO WAR

Tensions build between Britain and the USA for almost a decade. The British forcibly impress American sailors to serve in the Royal Navy during the Napoleonic Wars, which the US government strenuously objects to. After naval incidents and a failed US trade embargo on Britain, President James Madison declares war on 18 June 1812.

James Madison had hopes to quickly conquer Canada, but his optimism ultimately would prove to be misplaced

1812-14

## AMERICAN INVASIONS OF CANADA

The war is dominated by repeated American invasions of Canada. Although they achieve some successes and temporarily take some territory, the Americans mostly suffer defeats in several battles and campaigns. The invasions contribute to a growing sense of Canadian nationhood.



13 October 1812

10 September-5 October 1813

## BATTLES OF LAKE ERIE & THE THAMES

The Americans achieve their greatest successes against the British and Canadians at two battles within a month of each other. At Lake Erie, Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry captures six Royal Navy ships while the British lose control of Western Ontario at the Battle of the Thames.

The Battle of the Thames results in the death of Tecumseh, a Shawnee chief who had waged war against the USA with a powerful Native American confederacy





## BATTLES OF PLATTSBURGH & BALTIMORE

The Americans win two victories in quick succession in New York and Maryland against invading British forces. Both battles see the defeat of combined British naval and army forces, and they withdraw from the US east coast.

*A naval engagement on Lake Champlain during the Battle of Plattsburgh. This clash is nicknamed the 'False Nile' by the British, in reference to Horatio Nelson's great victory*



## TREATY OF GHENT

This peace treaty ends hostilities between the United States and Britain. The political status quo is restored and all conquests are relinquished on both sides. Disputes over territorial boundaries are deferred to joint commissions, and the war effectively ends in a stalemate.



*The treaty being signed in the Netherlands, with the Americans represented by the future president John Quincy Adams*

24 August 1814

6-15 September 1814

24 December 1814-17 February 1815

8 January 1815

## BURNING OF WASHINGTON

After defeating the Americans at the Battle of Bladensburg in Maryland, a British force marches on Washington, DC. and proceeds to burn down buildings, including the Capitol and the White House. A heavy thunderstorm puts out the fires and the British return to their ships.



*The British attack on Washington remains the only occasion where a foreign power has captured and occupied the US capital*



## BATTLE OF NEW ORLEANS

Although the Treaty of Ghent has been signed, the news does not reach America for a month. In the interim, the British invade Louisiana but are famously defeated by Brevet Major General Andrew Jackson at the Battle of New Orleans.

*The Battle of New Orleans is a federal holiday in the USA, celebrated with songs, films and a national historical park*

Images: Getty

# NORTH AMERICA 1812-15

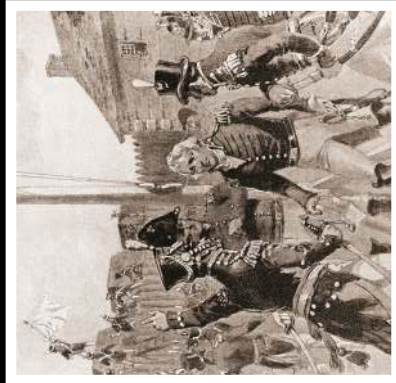
The war was fought over vast areas, including Canada, the east coast of the United States and Louisiana

## 1 SIEGE OF DETROIT

15-16 AUGUST 1812

DETROIT, MICHIGAN, USA

Detroit is one of a series of defeats that stops the first American invasion of Canada during the war. Major General Sir Isaac Brock and Tecumseh's Native Americans use a series of bluffs and deceptions to coerce the Americans into surrendering the fort and town.

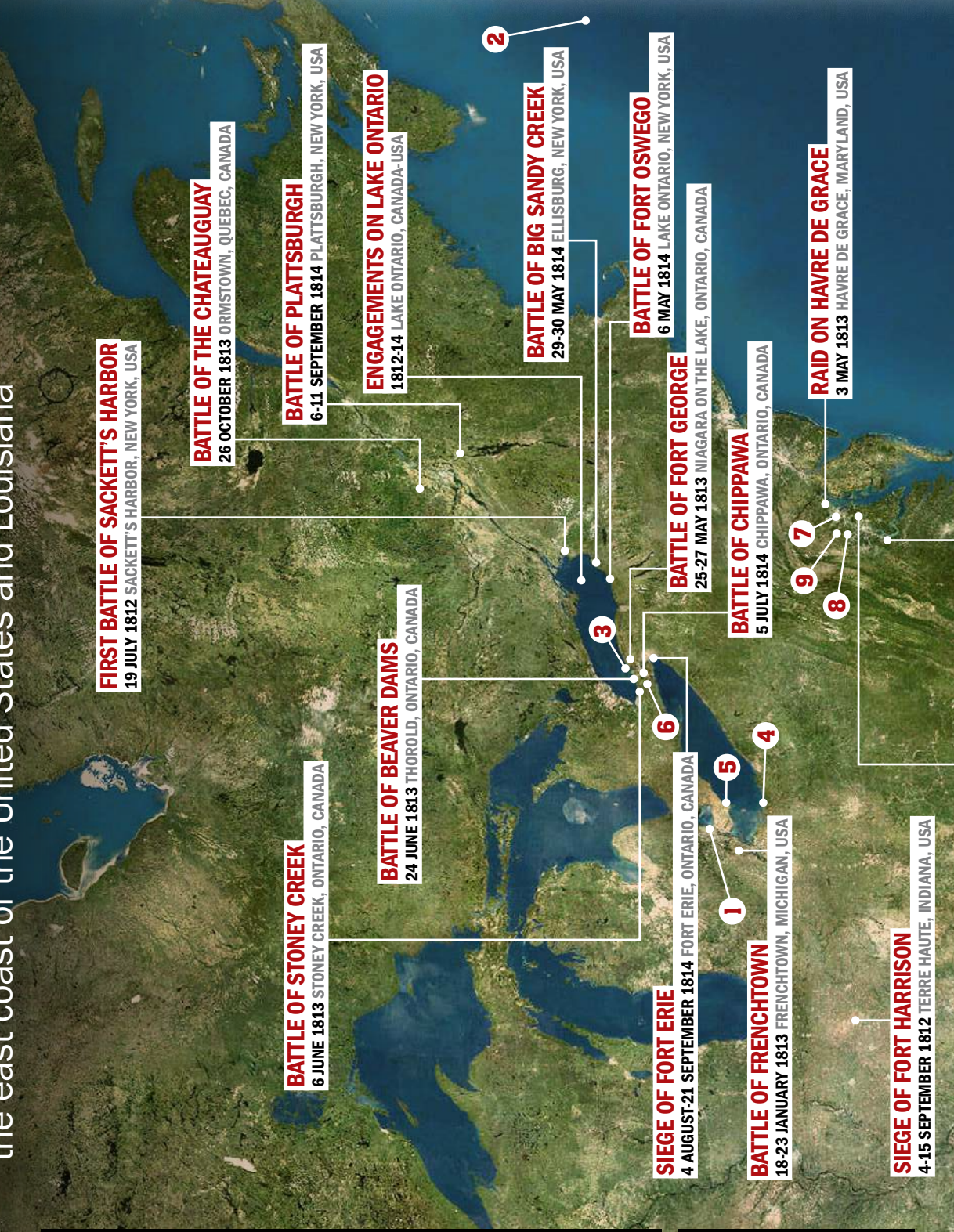


US Brigadier General William Hull surrenders the fort and town of Detroit to the British

## 2 USS CONSTITUTION VS. HMS GUERRIERE

19 AUGUST 1812 ATLANTIC OCEAN

The most famous naval clash of the war occurs when two rival frigates engage in a duel at sea. USS Constitution overpowers HMS Guerriere with cannon and musket fire. After a three-hour fight the British surrender when their masts collapse.



**FIRST BATTLE OF SACKETT'S HARBOR**  
19 JULY 1812 SACKETT'S HARBOR, NEW YORK, USA

**BATTLE OF THE CHATEAUGUAY**  
26 OCTOBER 1813 ORMSTOWN, QUEBEC, CANADA

**BATTLE OF PLATTSBURGH**  
6-11 SEPTEMBER 1814 PLATTSBURGH, NEW YORK, USA

**ENGAGEMENTS ON LAKE ONTARIO**  
1812-14 LAKE ONTARIO, CANADA-USA

**BATTLE OF BIG SANDY CREEK**  
29-30 MAY 1814 ELLISBURGH, NEW YORK, USA

**BATTLE OF FORT OSWEGO**  
6 MAY 1814 LAKE ONTARIO, NEW YORK, USA

**BATTLE OF FORT GEORGE**  
25-27 MAY 1813 NIAGARA ON THE LAKE, ONTARIO, CANADA

**BATTLE OF CHIPPAWA**  
5 JULY 1814 CHIPPAWA, ONTARIO, CANADA

**RAID ON HAVRE DE GRACE**  
3 MAY 1813 HAVRE DE GRACE, MARYLAND, USA

**BATTLE OF STONEY CREEK**  
6 JUNE 1813 STONEY CREEK, ONTARIO, CANADA

**BATTLE OF BEAVER DAMS**  
24 JUNE 1813 THOROLD, ONTARIO, CANADA

**SIEGE OF FORT ERIE**  
4 AUGUST-21 SEPTEMBER 1814 FORT ERIE, ONTARIO, CANADA

**BATTLE OF FRENCHTOWN**  
18-23 JANUARY 1813 FRENCHTOWN, MICHIGAN, USA

**SIEGE OF FORT HARRISON**  
4-15 SEPTEMBER 1812 TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA, USA



**3 BATTLE OF QUEENSTON HEIGHTS**  
**13 OCTOBER 1812** QUEENSTON, ONTARIO, CANADA

Although Major General Sir Isaac Brock is killed early in the battle, British-Canadian forces successfully attack American positions with help from Native American warriors. The Americans suffer 300 casualties and almost 1,000 are captured.



Above: US forces unsuccessfully attempt to establish and defend a foothold on the Canadian side of the Niagara River

**4 BATTLE OF LAKE ERIE**  
**10 SEPTEMBER 1813** LAKE ERIE, PUT-IN-BAY, OHIO, USA

This major US naval victory ensures US control over Lake Erie. Oliver Hazard Perry loses his flagship but transfers to another ship and directly fights the British. The entire Royal Navy squadron of six vessels is captured, and the British are forced to abandon Detroit.



**5 BATTLE OF THE THAMES**  
**5 OCTOBER 1813** CHATHAM-KENT, ONTARIO, CANADA

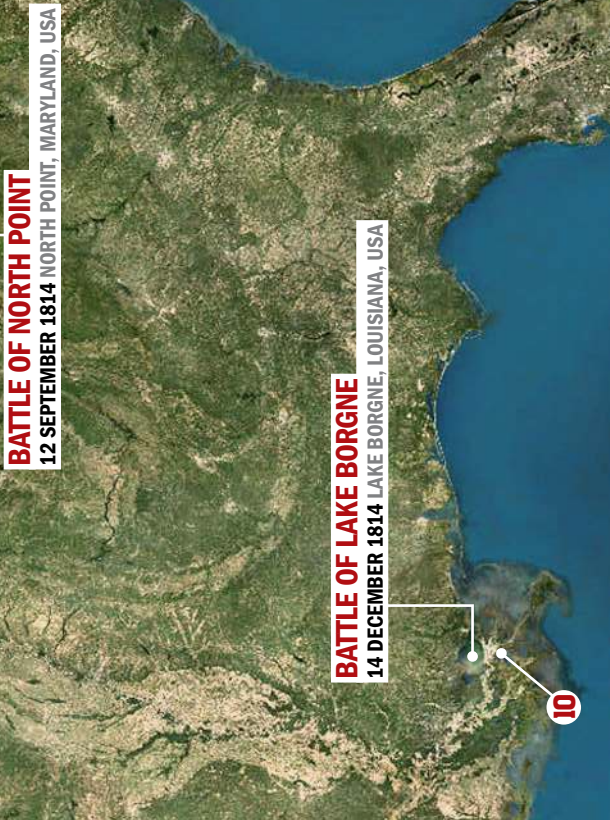
US forces consolidate their victory after the Battle of Lake Erie and pursue the British from Detroit into Ontario. A battle is fought on the Thames River, where the British and Native American allies are defeated. The most significant casualty is the Shawnee leader Tecumseh.

**6 BATTLE OF LUNDY'S LANE**  
**25 JULY 1814** NIAGARA FALLS, ONTARIO, CANADA

Fought 1.5 kilometres (one mile) west of Niagara Falls, Lundy's Lane is one of the bloodiest battles of the war. Both the British and Americans suffer over 850 casualties, and the battle ends in a tactical draw. The British claim a strategic victory because the Americans withdraw to Fort Erie.

**BATTLE OF NORTH POINT**  
**12 SEPTEMBER 1814** NORTH POINT, MARYLAND, USA

**BATTLE OF LAKE BORGNE**  
**14 DECEMBER 1814** LAKE BORGNE, LOUISIANA, USA




**RAID ON ALEXANDRIA**  
**29 AUGUST-2 SEPTEMBER 1814** ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA, USA

**7 BATTLE OF BLADENSBURG**  
**24 AUGUST 1814** BLADENSBURG, MARYLAND, USA

The British use rockets to turn the flank of American troops defending Washington, D.C. Their victory enables them to march on the US capital, and Bladensburg is dubbed the "greatest disgrace ever dealt to American arms".

**8 BURNING OF WASHINGTON**  
**24 AUGUST 1814** WASHINGTON, DC, USA

The most famous incident of the war sees British forces enter and burn the US capital. President Madison and his administration flee while the British torch the White House, Capitol building, the US Treasury, navy yard and other structures.



The White House after it was burned on 24 August 1814. The British plundered many items from the building, although a painting of George Washington was rescued

**9 BATTLE OF BALTIMORE**  
**12-15 SEPTEMBER 1814** BALTIMORE, MARYLAND, USA

Fought on both land and sea, the British attack America's third largest city. The Americans put up a spirited defence, and the sight of the national flag over Fort M'Henry inspires the poet Francis Scott Key to write the lyrics to *The Star Spangled Banner*. This later becomes the USA's national anthem.

**10 BATTLE OF NEW ORLEANS**  
**8 JANUARY 1815** NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA, USA

The final major battle of the war actually takes place after the Treaty of Ghent has been signed. Andrew Jackson successfully defends New Orleans, and the British commander Sir Edward Pakenham is killed during the battle.

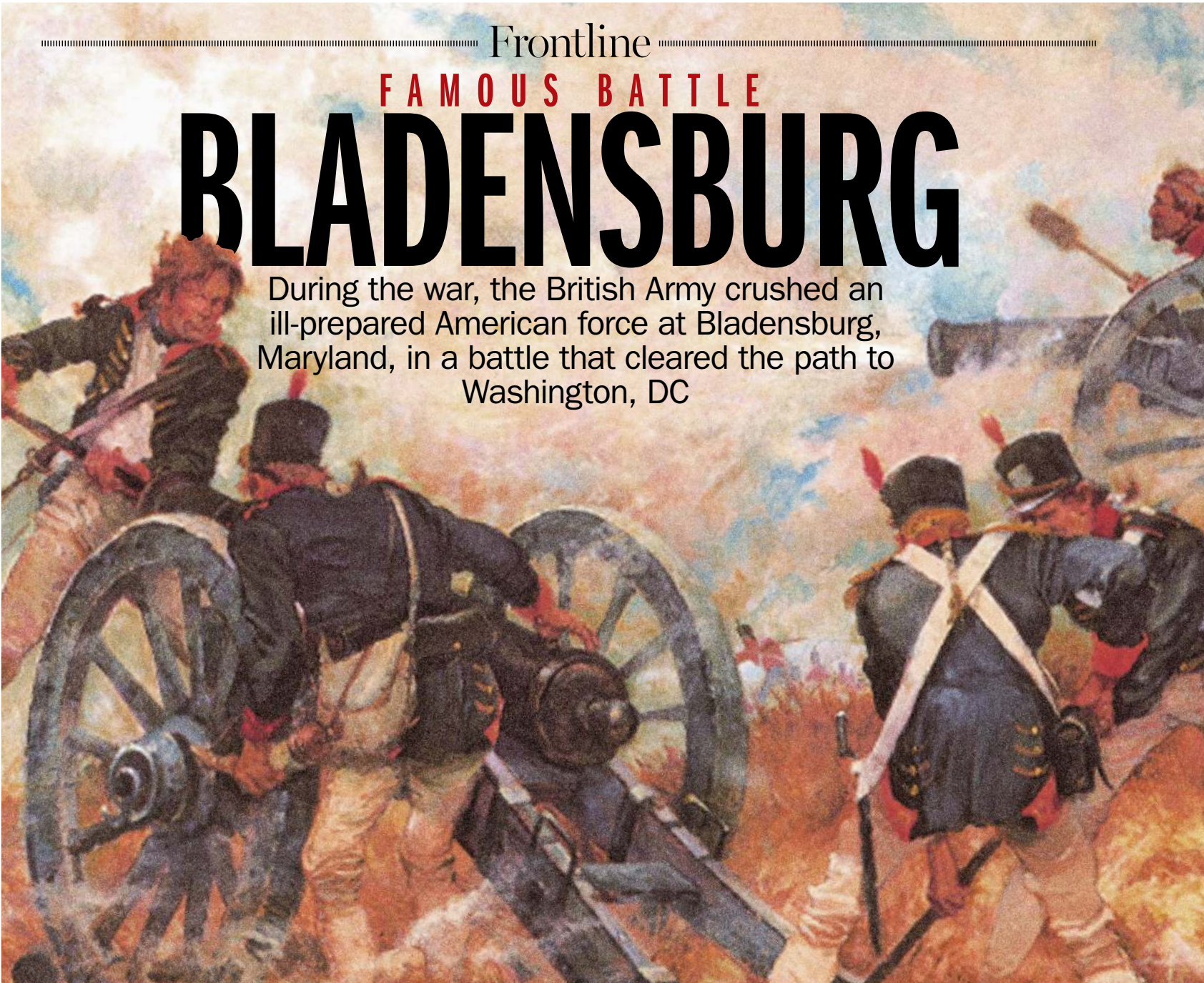
**"PRESIDENT MADISON AND HIS ADMINISTRATION FLEE WHILE THE BRITISH TORCH THE WHITE HOUSE, CAPITOL BUILDING, THE US TREASURY, NAVY YARD AND OTHER STRUCTURES"**

Left: Captain Oliver Hazard Perry transfers to a small boat after abandoning USS Lawrence during the Battle of Lake Erie

FAMOUS BATTLE

# BLADENSBURG

During the war, the British Army crushed an ill-prepared American force at Bladensburg, Maryland, in a battle that cleared the path to Washington, DC



**T**he war between Britain and the United States had grown uglier and harsher the longer it continued. In July 1814, Governor-General Sir George Prevost in Canada had made a request to Vice Admiral Sir Alexander Cochrane, commander of the Royal Navy's North American Station, to retaliate for American outrages – the most notable being the burning of government buildings by American troops in York, Ontario.

In compliance, Cochrane ordered his forces to “destroy and lay waste” to American towns on the Atlantic coast. There was to be a larger target of British vengeance that summer, though. Together with

his Royal Navy colleague, Rear Admiral George Cockburn, and their British Army counterpart, Major General Robert Ross, they conceived a plan to strike at the capital of the United States – Washington, DC. Ross was an immensely experienced officer, having served all over Europe during the Napoleonic Wars, which had just come to a temporary end.

On 16 August, a British expeditionary force formed in Chesapeake Bay. Cockburn's ships landed Ross's army of about 3,400 troops at Benedict on the Patuxent River on 19 August 1814. A diversionary attack of a few ships was sent to Baltimore to convince the Americans that the Maryland city was the true object, thereby keeping them from putting the bulk of their forces in front of Washington, DC. By 20 August, Ross was at Nottingham in Maryland, having encountered only scattered American opposition.

## American defences

The Tenth Military District had been formed to organise American forces in the area under

a single command, but the commander of American forces in and around the capital, Brigadier General Winder – a Baltimore lawyer and political appointee of President James Madison – was ill suited for the job. He was unable to delegate responsibilities to anyone else and exhausted himself trying to do everything.

Winder did have a suitably large body of troops at his command, as some 9,000 militiamen had turned out when called to the colours, with about 50 artillery pieces, but the bulk of these – 5,000 men and 30 guns – were at Baltimore. Just 2,500 men and a dozen artillery pieces were at Washington, DC, the actual destination of the British force. Of Winder's total force under arms, there were just 900 US Army regulars and only 400 cavalry.

Ross's army, in contrast, was full of veterans from the duke of Wellington's 'Invincibles', fresh from the Napoleonic Wars. Winder's maladroit handling of his men exacerbated his difficulties. Most of his soldiers were not organised into a coherent

*Left: US General William Winder was thoroughly outclassed at Bladensburg*



Sailors and marines under the command of Commodore Barney made a final stand against the British, but couldn't stop them from entering the US capital



The British burned American government buildings in Washington, DC after winning the Battle of Bladensburg



## WASHINGTON BURNS

### AFTER THE BATTLE OF BLADENSBURG, THE BRITISH BURNED GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS IN WASHINGTON, DC

The Battle of Bladensburg had been won, but General Ross still had his orders to destroy American property from Governor-General Prevost, in reprisal for similar acts committed by American troops in Canada. Ross had no liking for them, remarking that he had never been asked to do such things to property in France. Nevertheless, he had to obey Prevost.

On 24 August 1814 Ross marched with a 200-strong company to Washington, DC to burn government buildings there. Not wanting to do this, he tried initially to find an American official, whom he might persuade to make a ransom payment in exchange for not burning the city. But there were no officials to be found, and he rode into the city at the head of his men, whereupon his horse was promptly shot out from under him.

The Capitol building was set ablaze by gunpowder dumped across the floors, helped along by rockets shot straight into the building. The US Treasury was torched, as were the homes of the State and War Departments.

The Americans themselves contributed in part to the conflagration. They set the US Navy Yard alight to keep its buildings, stores and two ships still under construction, the sloop-of-war *Argus* and the frigate *Columbia*, out of British hands.

The presidential mansion, the President's House (later called the White House), was also on the target list. Admiral Cockburn, who had also made the trip with Ross to Washington, DC, helped himself to the dinner for 40 guests that First Lady Dolley Madison had laid out for her husband, President James Madison and his senior military officers and cabinet members. Cockburn and his companions found President Madison's wine, which they all agreed was very good, and drank toasts to the prince regent of the United Kingdom, the future King George IV. Afterwards, they set the house on fire.

fighting force. Making matters worse, Secretary of War John Armstrong left the capital's defences in an utterly inadequate state, thinking the British would strike at Baltimore instead.

### The Battle of Bladensburg

Ross's troops next strode 16 kilometres (ten miles) from Nottingham to Upper Marlboro on 22 August, where they encamped. Ross now needed to find a crossing of the Potomac. On the morning of 24 August, the Americans destroyed two bridges over the river's East Branch, but Ross started north for Bladensburg, where another crossing might be made.

Winder was in the US Navy Yard in Washington, DC with President Madison and Secretary of State James Monroe when news of Ross's movement towards Bladensburg reached them. They all made their way there. Ross approached Bladensburg and found Winder waiting for him, his army haphazardly arrayed in three lines, its arrangement having been dictated

more by the time in which Winder's poorly managed forces had arrived at Bladensburg.

The Bladensburg bridge had not been destroyed. The leading elements of Ross's army came upon it around noon on 24 August. The intrepid veterans of the 85th Foot rushed over the bridge through a storm of musketry and cannon fire from the men of Winder's first line. President Madison, who had been present on the battlefield, quickly retired to a respectful distance once the shooting started. The American troops were taken aback by the relentless charge of the 85th and soon were on the run.

The second American line, anchored in place by the Fifth Maryland Volunteer Regiment, held on under British pressure for a while, but soon retreated. This caused the poorly trained militiamen alongside to melt and hurry after them, with the movement collapsing into a desperate flight.

There was now just the third line left to Winder. This was positioned about 1.5

kilometres (one mile) from Bladensburg and was composed of the sailors and marines under US Navy Commodore Joseph Barney. Barney's gunboat flotilla had been penned in the Patuxent by Cockburn's move upriver several days earlier. He had scuttled his useless gunboats and then dragged his artillery into position near to Bladensburg, deploying across the road to Washington, DC. He opened fire as the British 85th Foot, pursuing the fleeing American soldiers, came into range. This held up the British advance, but only temporarily. Instead of reorganising his troops to form a new defensive line, Winder sent them orders to retreat. The battle was over.

Bladensburg was an unmitigated disaster for the Americans, who retreated at full speed in the direction of the capital. American losses stood at 26 dead and 51 wounded. British losses were heavier, with 64 killed and 185 wounded, but the battle had gone entirely in their favour. The road to a defenceless Washington, DC was now wide open.

# PRESIDENTS, CHIEFS & OFFICERS

The war was a clash between ambitious American and British officers, with Native American warriors caught in between

**ANDREW JACKSON**  
**BREVET MAJOR GENERAL**  
**UNITED STATES 1767-1845**  
**THE SEVENTH US PRESIDENT AND**  
**ANGLOPHOBIC VICTOR OF NEW ORLEANS**

Jackson was arguably the most famous soldier of the war, and his service during the conflict helped to propel him to the presidency of the United States. Born on the western frontier of the Carolinas, Jackson served in the American War of Independence as a courier for rebel militias. Although he was only a child, Jackson was captured by the British and wounded by a British officer, who angrily slashed at him with a sabre. He almost died in captivity, and his mother and brother died of disease towards the end of the war. Jackson, who was physically scarred by his experiences, developed an intense hatred for the British, which asserted itself decades later.

When war was declared in 1812 Jackson was given a field command, and he soon defeated the British-allied Creek Native Americans at the Battle of Tohopeka. This

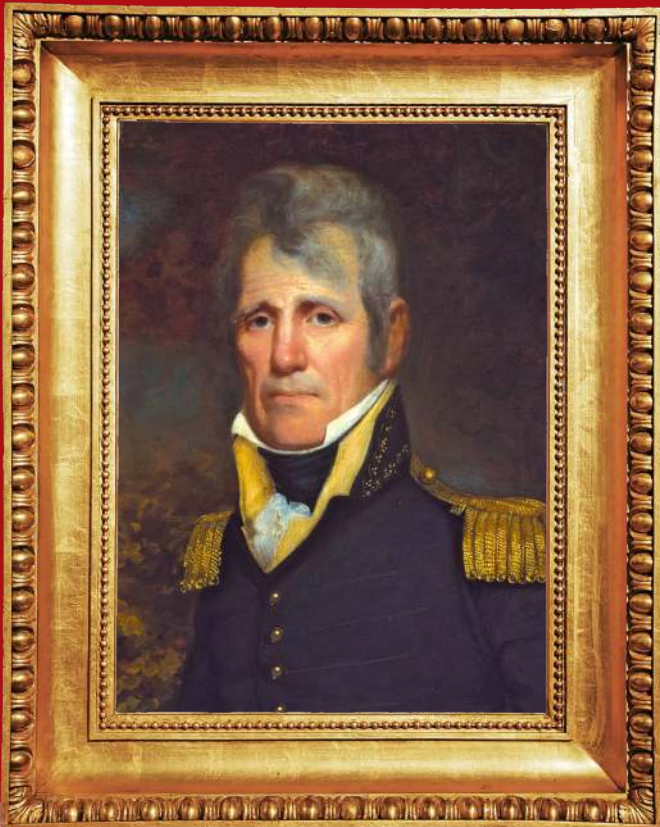
battle established him as an American hero, and he went on to prepare the way for the US occupation of Spanish-held Florida. After occupying Pensacola, Jackson marched his army to New Orleans in December 1814 just as the British were landing in Louisiana.

Jackson declared martial law in New Orleans and ordered every able-bodied man to defend the city. 4,000 men volunteered, and a defence line of improvised breastworks was created and named 'Line Jackson'. When the battle against the British began outside the city, Jackson commanded the majority of the troops. The British outnumbered the Americans, but in a two-hour battle the US defences held. Jackson's men inflicted heavy fire on the enemy until the British withdrew. 285 British soldiers were killed compared to only 13 Americans, and Jackson secured his status as a national hero.

His victory was particularly celebrated because the battle happened after the signing of the Treaty of Ghent, which ended the war in a stalemate. New Orleans was a great boost to American morale. Jackson's popularity remained undimmed for years, and the battle became the platform on which he became the seventh president in 1829.

**"285 BRITISH SOLDIERS WERE KILLED COMPARED TO ONLY 13 AMERICANS, AND JACKSON SECURED HIS STATUS AS A NATIONAL HERO"**

*Left: A portrait of Andrew Jackson, which was painted in 1819 in New York. His friend Samuel Swartwout praised the likeness and wrote to Jackson, "I have just seen the Jarvis portrait of you. It is inimitable"*



**TECUMSEH**  
**CHIEF, SHAWNEE 1768-1813**  
**THE SHAWNEE CHIEF LIONISED BY THE BRITISH**  
**AS THE 'WELLINGTON OF THE INDIANS'**

Tecumseh was a Shawnee chief who was the leader of the First Nations Confederacy that was formed to resist American encroachment on Native American lands. Born in Ohio, Tecumseh was exposed to warfare at an early age during the American War of Independence and Northwest Indian War. He spent decades organising the various tribes against US expansion north of Ohio, and his primary belief was that "the Great Spirit intended [the land] as the common property of all the tribes, nor can it be sold without the consent of all."

In 1808, with war looming between Britain and the USA, Tecumseh travelled to Canada and reluctantly allied with the British. When war broke out in 1812, his confederacy laid clever ambushes against the Americans and helped the British capture Detroit. Tecumseh was killed at the Battle of the Thames in October 1813, which was an incalculable loss to the First Nations.

*Sir Isaac Brock wrote of Tecumseh to the British prime minister: "A more sagacious or more gallant warrior does not, I believe, exist"*





**SIR EDWARD PAKENHAM**  
**MAJOR GENERAL, GREAT BRITAIN 1778-1815**  
 THE WELL-CONNECTED OFFICER WHO WAS  
 KILLED AT NEW ORLEANS

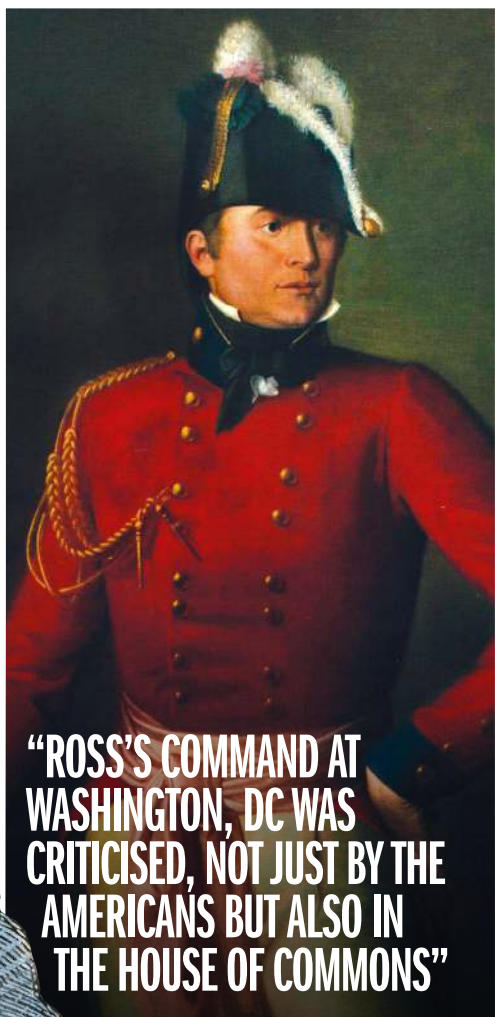
Pakenham was born into privilege as an Anglo-Irish aristocrat and purchased a commission in the British Army when he was 16 years old. Despite buying rather than earning his officer's rank, Pakenham was a capable leader and became a highly experienced soldier who served with distinction in the West Indies and during the Peninsular War. He gained the reputation of a model gentleman soldier, which was cemented when Arthur Wellesley, the future duke of Wellington, married his sister in 1806.

By September 1814, Pakenham was a major general at the age of only 36 and replaced Robert Ross as commander of the British North American Army. He was actually opposed to the American war but dutifully accepted the command. The Battle of New Orleans was Pakenham's first action in America, and instead of besieging the city he opted for an open battle.

Wellington later eulogised his brother-in-law, saying, "We have but one consolation, that he fell as he lived, in the honourable discharge of his duty"

The British underestimated the power of the US artillery, and Pakenham launched a general advance, where he was mortally wounded. His last words before he died were a message to his fellow general John Lambert: "Tell him... tell Lambert to send forward the reserves." His orders were in vain and the British lost the battle.

**ROBERT ROSS**  
**MAJOR GENERAL, GREAT BRITAIN 1766-1814**  
 THE IRISH OFFICER WHO OVERSAW THE BURNING OF WASHINGTON, DC



**"ROSS'S COMMAND AT WASHINGTON, DC WAS CRITICISED, NOT JUST BY THE AMERICANS BUT ALSO IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS"**

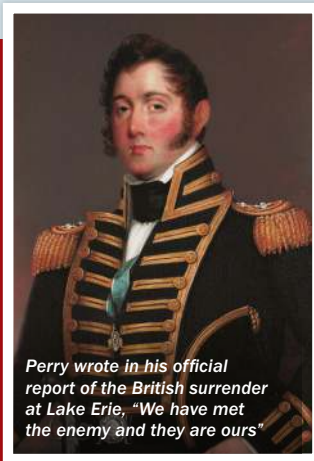
Born in Ireland, Ross was educated at Trinity College, Dublin, before joining the British Army as an ensign in 1789. He served with distinction during the Napoleonic Wars and fought in many battles, including Alexandria, Corunna, Vitoria and Orthez.

In June 1814, Ross commanded a British expeditionary force of three battalions against the east coast of the USA in revenge for their attacks on Canada. He landed in Maryland, defeated the Americans at Bladensburg and unexpectedly entered Washington, DC on 24 August. Ross's troops burned all the public buildings in the capital, as well as military installations.

The British left the following day, but Ross's command at Washington was criticised, not just by the Americans but also in the House of Commons. Conversely, government ministers, including Lord Liverpool, the prime minister, also praised him. Ross was mortally wounded shortly after the burning of Washington while he was riding up front at the Battle of Baltimore on 12 September 1814.

Left: Rear Admiral George Cockburn advised Ross on the attack at Washington, DC and wrote after his death, "Our country has lost in him one of our best and bravest soldiers"

**OLIVER HAZARD PERRY**  
**CAPTAIN, UNITED STATES 1785-1819**  
 THE AMERICAN NAVAL HERO OF THE BATTLE OF LAKE ERIE



Perry wrote in his official report of the British surrender at Lake Erie, "We have met the enemy and they are ours"

Perry joined the US Navy as a midshipman, aged 14, in 1799. He fought against the French in the Mediterranean and against piracy and the slave trade in the West Indies before the War of 1812.

He started the conflict as a master commandant and was sent to Lake Erie to complete the construction of a naval squadron to challenge British control of the Great Lakes.

With a newly constructed fleet, Perry engaged the British at the Battle of Lake Erie on 10 September 1813. The Americans had superior short-range firepower but not at long-range, and the British were able to disable the US flagship USS Lawrence. Perry quickly transferred to USS Niagara in a small boat and won the battle in 15 minutes by firing broadsides straight into the British line of ships. All of the British ships surrendered, and Perry was lauded for his leadership. He was promoted to captain, received the Thanks of Congress and was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal.

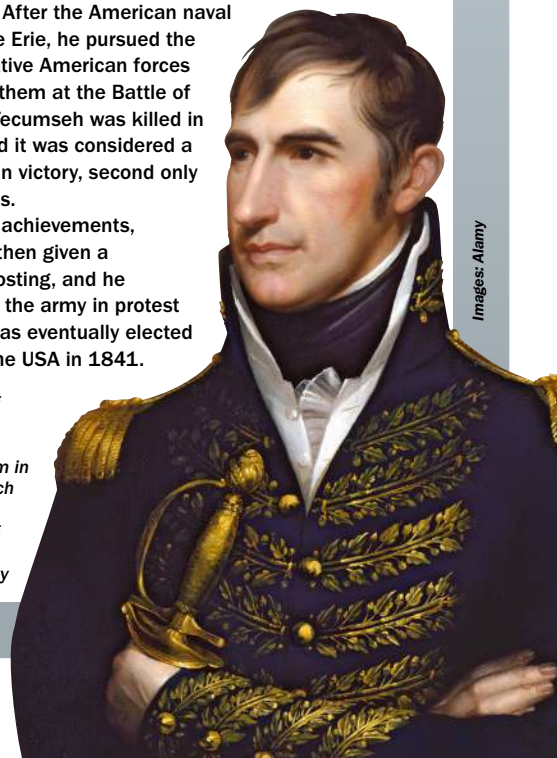
**WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON**  
**BRIGADIER GENERAL, UNITED STATES 1773-1841**  
 THE NINTH PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES WHO WON THE BATTLE OF THE THAMES

Born in 1773, Harrison was the last US president to be born before the American War of Independence. His father Benjamin was a Founding Father and signatory to the Declaration of Independence, so public service was in Harrison's blood. After studying medicine, Harrison joined the US Army as an ensign and rose through the ranks while fighting in the Northwest Indian War. He became a national hero when he defeated Tecumseh's confederacy at the Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811.

During the War of 1812, Harrison commanded US forces in the northwest and trained his army into a disciplined fighting force. After the American naval victory at Lake Erie, he pursued the British and Native American forces and defeated them at the Battle of the Thames. Tecumseh was killed in this battle, and it was considered a great American victory, second only to New Orleans.

Despite his achievements, Harrison was then given a 'backwater' posting, and he resigned from the army in protest in 1814. He was eventually elected president of the USA in 1841.

Harrison died of pneumonia one month into his presidential term in April 1841, which made him the shortest serving president in American history



Images: Alamy

# NAVIES & NATIONS

Although the War of 1812 had little impact on Britain, the conflict increased national pride in the United States and a fledgling Canada

**T**he war was a mixed affair for the USA. Although there were famous land victories, such as the battles of the Thames and New Orleans, their importance was inflated to compensate for the defeats the US Army suffered at the hands of the British. Repeated attempts to conquer Canada failed, and Washington, DC itself was occupied and burned. For a nation that had successfully thrown off British rule only a generation before, the inability of the Americans to defend their own capital was humiliating. However, the

performance of the US Navy during the war was very different and noticeably successful.

## Ascendency of the US Navy

In 1812 the Royal Navy was the most powerful in the world, with over 500 active warships – 85 of which were already operating in American waters when the war broke out. The Royal Navy's prestige was at its zenith thanks to the stunning victories of Horatio Nelson.

By contrast, the US Navy was only 18 years old with merely a dozen ships. Nevertheless, the Americans were well trained and the USA

*USS Constitution's famous battle with HMS Guerriere ended when the British captain, James Richard Dacres, declared, "Our mizzen mast is gone, our main mast is gone and, upon the whole, you may say we have struck our flag"*



had a proud mercantile maritime tradition. American ships were also well built. For example, the frigate USS Constitution had 44 guns and a thick hull of live oak, which greatly aided it during its legendary duel with HMS Guerriere on 19 August 1812. Commanded by the aptly named Isaac Hull, the Constitution bested the Guerriere by pounding it with cannon fire and destroying its masts. This fight was only one of several US frigate victories against the British and demonstrated to the world that American sailors were formidable fighters.

The freshwater battles of the Great Lakes were also important for the US Navy. There was a shipbuilding arms race of light warships on Lake Erie, which culminated in an American victory in September 1813. Their success was not just down to their fighting spirit but also because the British struggled to receive supplies and reinforcements and therefore built a smaller inland fleet.

The war was the first real test of the US Navy, and the Americans were certainly not found wanting. The British still retained total command of the oceans, but the conflict was a triumph for America's naval reputation and created a lasting sense of national pride. From 1816, Congress financed more warships to be built, and the USA was on the way to becoming a significant military power.

### The emergence of Canada

Despite the US Navy's successes, the fact remained that the Americans' military goal of conquering Canada was a notable failure. It was widely recognised that much of the fighting would be fought on Canadian soil, and many US settlers west of the Appalachians wanted to seize more land from Native Americans and punish the British for supporting their resistance. Former president Thomas Jefferson even predicted that conquering Canada would be "a mere matter of marching", and many believed that the result would be "the final expulsion of England from the American continent".

In 1812, 'British Canada' consisted of two colonies, called Upper and Lower Canada. Collectively known as 'The Canadas', these provinces only covered parts of modern Ontario, Labrador, Quebec and Newfoundland. Regular British troops, Native American allies and local militiamen vigorously pushed the American



*USS Constitution was preserved for the nation and is the world's oldest commissioned naval vessel still afloat. It owes its present existence to American pride in its fighting achievements during the War of 1812*

invasions back. Several key victories, such as Queenston Heights and Stoney Creek, could not have been won without all three working together, and the stakes for the local colonists were high.

The burning of the city of Washington by the British was largely a revenge attack for the Americans capturing and burning York (Toronto) and Newark (Niagara-on-the-Lake). Meanwhile, Tecumseh's death in battle meant that Native Americans would now struggle to fight against the ever-expanding American settlers across the continent.

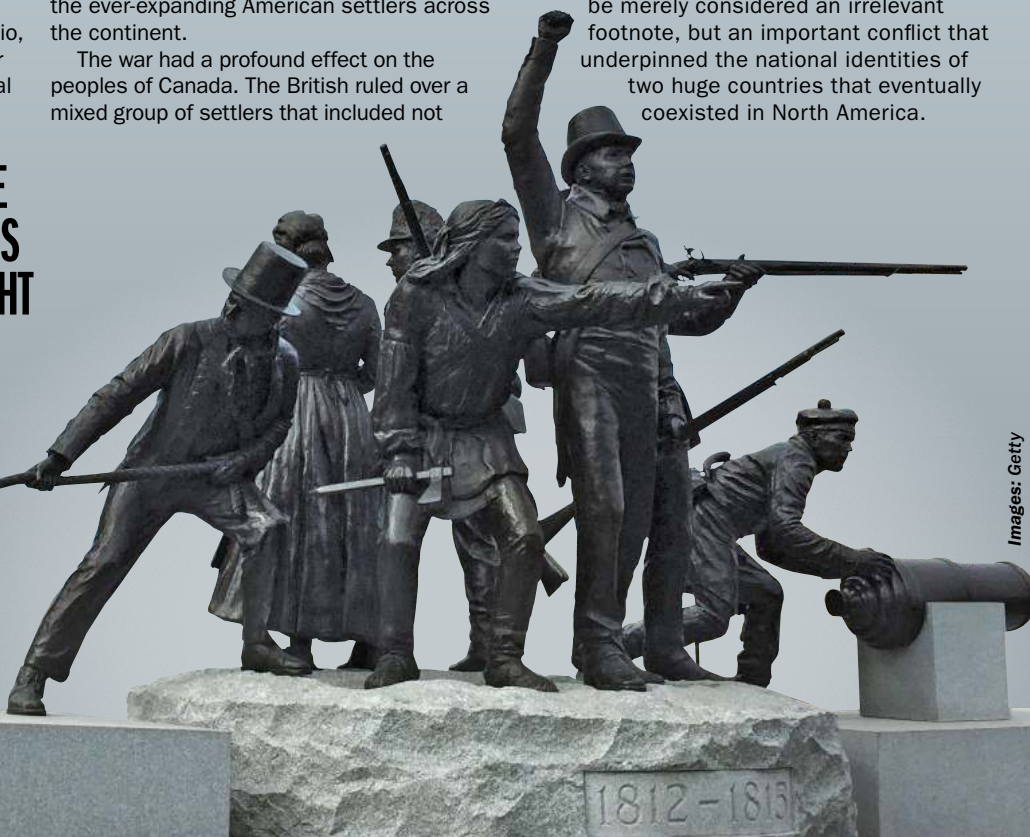
The war had a profound effect on the peoples of Canada. The British ruled over a mixed group of settlers that included not

just United Empire Loyalists (who had fled from the American Revolution) and British colonists, but also Native Americans, US economic migrants and French Québécois. The latter three groups had no real allegiance to the British Empire, but they had all collectively fought against the American invaders who had ravaged their lands. This eventually unified a perception of themselves as 'Canadians', with a distinct identity separate to their southern neighbours.

This is why the War of 1812 should not be merely considered an irrelevant footnote, but an important conflict that underpinned the national identities of two huge countries that eventually coexisted in North America.

**“TECUMSEH’S DEATH IN BATTLE MEANT THAT NATIVE AMERICANS WOULD NOW STRUGGLE TO FIGHT AGAINST THE EVER-EXPANDING AMERICAN SETTLERS ACROSS THE CONTINENT”**

*The War of 1812 Monument at Parliament Hill, Ottawa, commemorates the forging of Canadian national identity, with seven figures that reflect the different peoples who successfully defended Canada from invasion*



*Images: Getty*

# WEAPONS & EQUIPMENT

Fought mainly to reconfirm the independence of the United States from Britain, the conflict ironically saw both sides armed in largely the same manner



**T**he War of 1812 saw a number of weapons figure prominently in the fighting. Muskets were the common firearms of both armies, being distributed to most infantrymen, while rifles were in the hands of specialists or militia. The Pattern 1796 light cavalry sabre was a new take on an age-old weapon. Another, the gunpowder-propelled Congreve rocket, was innovative and pointed the way to the future.

## PENNSYLVANIA RIFLE

Produced originally by Pennsylvania gunsmiths, the flintlock Pennsylvania rifle was the favoured firearm of the American frontiersman. It fired a lighter ball than a musket, but its barrel was rifled, and the spin imparted made the projectile more accurate.

**“MUSKETS WERE THE COMMON FIREARMS OF BOTH ARMIES, BEING DISTRIBUTED TO MOST INFANTRYMEN, WHILE RIFLES WERE IN THE HANDS OF SPECIALISTS OR MILITIA”**





## PATTERN 1796 BRITISH LIGHT CAVALRY SABRE

The Pattern 1796 sabre was 84 centimetres (33 inches) long, with a curved steel blade that thickened towards the point, increasing its cutting power. It was said that one blow could cleave open a skull or lop off an arm.

*The Pattern 1796 sabre was used by the British throughout the Napoleonic Wars and during the War of 1812*



*The Pennsylvania rifle was lethally accurate to 365 metres (400 yards)*



**“THE ‘BROWN BESS’ WAS THE NICKNAME OF THE STANDARD .75-CALIBRE LAND PATTERN FLINTLOCK MUSKET, CARRIED IN VARIOUS VERSIONS BY MOST BRITISH INFANTRYMEN FOR MANY DECADES”**

## BROWN BESS MUSKET

The ‘Brown Bess’ was the nickname of the standard .75-calibre Land Pattern flintlock musket, carried in various versions by most British infantrymen for many decades during the 18th and 19th centuries. A bayonet was attached to the front end of the muzzle-loading weapon for close combat.

*The Brown Bess was the primary infantry firearm of the British Army during the War of 1812*

*Images: Alamy, Getty*



## CONGREVE ROCKET

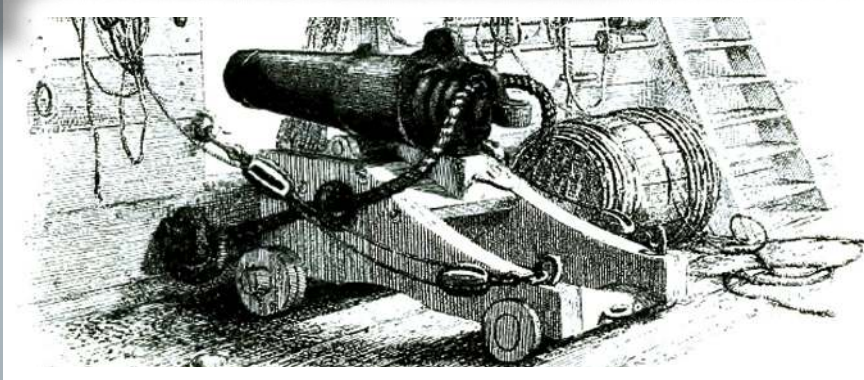
Named after its inventor, William Congreve, the 14.5-kilogram (32-pound) rocket was launched by black powder, and carried bursting or incendiary warheads weighing between 1.5-11 kilograms (3-24 pounds). Congreve rockets were used at the Battles of Lundy’s Lane and Bladensburg, and also against Fort Mchenry.

*The Congreve rocket, a largely inaccurate weapon, was invented in 1804 and came in several sizes*

## CARRONADE

Invented in 1776 at the Carron ironworks in Falkirk, Scotland, a carronade was a short, stubby gun that fired a heavy cannonball relative to its size and weight. Its drawback was its short range compared to a conventional cannon. It was employed on both land and sea.

*The hard-hitting carronade was used extensively on warships during the War of 1812*



THE

# FORGOTTEN MANY

The 'Few' may have won the Battle of Britain, but they were just the tip of a vast machine. Hundreds of thousands of personnel on the ground made their every move possible

WORDS STUART HADAWAY

**F**irst, let us get one thing straight: the Royal Air Force won the Battle of Britain. It is true that many other organisations played their part, and would have played a larger one should the Germans have ever attempted to invade. But that invasion never came because the principal precondition established by the Germans themselves – air superiority over the English Channel and southern UK – was never met. The RAF, and primarily Fighter Command, made sure of this.

However, while pilot confronted and defeating the enemy in the air, their continuing efforts were only made possible by an extensive and complex ground organisation that had been carefully built up since the very earliest days of the RAF's existence.

This organisation fed, equipped and cared for the pilots on the ground and directed their efforts in the air, while also keeping their aircraft in flying condition and providing the fuel, ammunition and spare parts they needed to get off the ground.

Flying Officer (later Air Commodore) Al Deere of No. 74 Squadron recalled, "On-the-spot repairs of damaged aircraft were carried out by our own ground crews, who were magnificent. All night long, lights burned in the shuttered hangars as the fitters, electricians, armourers and riggers worked unceasingly to put the maximum number on the line for the next day's operations. All day too they worked, not even ceasing when the airfield was threatened with attack. A grand body of men about whom too little has been written but without whose efforts victory would not have been possible."

Growing from some 230,000 personnel in June 1940 to over 350,000 by the end of the Battle of Britain, these men and women are the 'Forgotten Many'.

## Foundations of an air force

Through the 1920s, the RAF was struggling to survive in an age of stringent financial restrictions. Despite the many calls on the RAF and Air Ministry's purse, the chief of the Air Staff, Sir Hugh Trenchard, resolutely implemented his plans to invest in the future. He established technical schools and apprentice schemes to ensure the long-term flow of adequate numbers of well-trained and educated young men into his noncommissioned ranks – a novel idea, unheard of in either of the other services. In fact, the apprentice schemes were actually quite revolutionary across the whole of society. Apprentices (or at least their

*Right: Pilots engage Messerschmitt 109s over southern England. They were kept in the fight by a vast support network, which brought them to the right place in the sky, kept the pilots fed and ready, and repaired damaged planes and airfields*

*Left: An RAF apprentice works on an aircraft's engine. The highly skilled teams on the ground played a vital role in the Battle of Britain*



**“ON-THE-SPOT REPAIRS OF  
DAMAGED AIRCRAFT WERE CARRIED  
OUT BY OUR OWN GROUND CREWS,  
WHO WERE MAGNIFICENT”**

– Flying Officer Al Deere,  
No. 74 Squadron



Image: Piotr Forkasiewicz

## THE FORGOTTEN MANY

families) usually had to pay their employers, reimbursing them for taking the time and effort to train their students in the mysteries of their trade. However, the members of the Aircraft Apprentices Scheme at No. 1 School of Technical Training, based at RAF Halton, not only received first-class tutoring in a range of engineering and technical trades, they also received pay. Particularly for working class applicants, this made the apprentice scheme a unique opportunity to secure their future, and competition for the 1,000 or so places each year was intense. It made the scheme expensive, but through it Trenchard was laying solid foundations and ensuring the quality of his rank and file for decades to come.

Apprentices could join between the ages of 15 and 17-and-a-half and trained for three years. In the late 1930s, as the RAF expanded, the apprentice scheme was supplemented by a Boy Entrants scheme, where applicants who did not quite reach apprentice entry-level were entered into a slightly lower-level 12-18 month course.

Anyone over the age of 17-and-a-half could join as a man, attending two months of basic training at the RAF Depot at RAF Uxbridge before going for a range of specialist training. No. 3 School of Technical Training at RAF Manston, for example,

could turn a man into a blacksmith in a year, a fabric worker in six months, or either a motor transport driver or an aero-engine fitter in four months. At the Electrical and Wireless School at RAF Cranwell, meanwhile, courses ranged between six months and two years on a variety of specialist subjects.

Whether you were a former apprentice (known colloquially as 'Halton Brats') or joined through another route, graduation from these training courses was just the start. Personnel would have to undertake regular further training courses (some as 'placements' with manufacturers), and promotions depended on passing 'Trade Tests' to prove competence in your chosen area. Particularly for Brats, by the time they reached the ranks of noncommissioned officers, the technical levels of education achieved were not far short of the equivalent of university courses.

Officers faced a different course. Some specialisms existed – engineering officers, for example, went through extensive technical training at the Home Aircraft Depot at Henlow. But the vast majority of officers joined as 'general duties', and in the 1930s this required them to qualify as pilots (although of course not all pilots were officers; about a quarter were

**“THIS ATTRACTED ADVENTUROUS YOUNG MEN WHO WERE CAPTIVATED BY THE EXCITEMENT AND ADVENTURE OF FLYING, BUT WHO DID NOT WANT TO COMMIT THEMSELVES TO A FULL CAREER”**



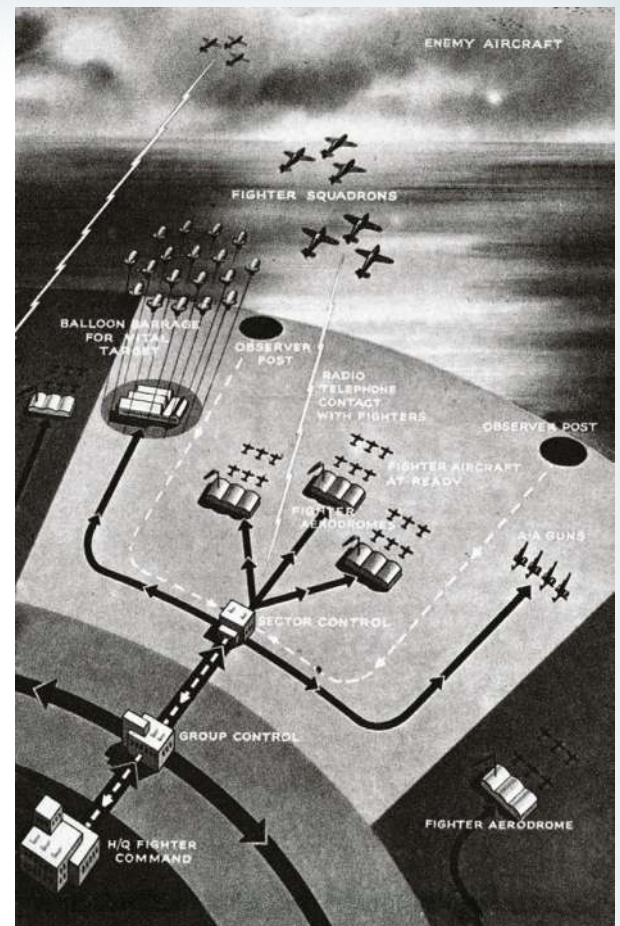
*Two members of the ground crew chat with Squadron Leader Peter Townsend DSO DFC on their Hawker Hurricane at RAF Wick*

*Ground crew aim for a quick turnaround as they refuel a Hawker Hurricane of No. 32 Squadron at RAF Biggin Hill in August 1940, while the pilot waits in the cockpit*





Right: An illustration from a pamphlet produced by the Air Ministry in 1941, showing the air defence network, known as the 'Dowding system' – although the significant role of radar was omitted, as it was still considered a secret



RAF trainee technical staff going through a small part of their extensive – and never-ending – training

## “IT WAS ALSO A FALLACY ALL ALONG TO THINK THAT THE RAF COULD BE THUS BOMBED INTO SUBMISSION”

sergeants). However, officers were always in short supply, so in the mid-1930s the Short Service Commission system was introduced, where men could join for a four-year term, extended to six years in 1939. This attracted adventurous young men who were captivated by the excitement and adventure of flying, but who did not want to commit themselves to a full career in the RAF. They would spend about a year in flying training, before joining a frontline squadron, where their training would continue.

By 1939, about four per cent of RAF officers were on these short-term enlistments. Due to the nature of their commissions and the career structure of the service, it meant that the vast majority of pilots on flying squadrons were Short Service Commission men. By 1940 the mobilisation of the Auxiliary Air Force and RAF Volunteer Reserve had further diluted the number of career officers in squadrons.

These factors meant that in the average squadron during the Battle of Britain, the ground crews were overwhelmingly career professionals, with longer service and more advanced training than the aircrew they supported.

### Fighting the Battle of Britain

On 16 July 1940, Adolf Hitler issued Führer Directive No. 16, calling for the destruction of the RAF in preparation for an invasion of Britain. With little progress having been made over the next two weeks, on 1 August

he issued Directive No. 17, calling for the Luftwaffe to overwhelm the RAF in the shortest possible time, with an absolute deadline of 15 September. After further preparation, during which small-scale attacks were made on coastal targets, and following delays due to bad weather, 13 August was announced as Aldertag ('Eagle Day') – the first day of Unternehmen Adlerangriff ('Operation Eagle Attack'), the campaign to destroy the RAF.

This first mass blow of the Luftwaffe against the RAF was a failure. Although heavy raids were launched against airfields and radar sites, poor intelligence meant that large parts of the attack were wasted on Coastal and Bomber Command airfields, rather than concentrating on the vital fighter airfields. It was also a fallacy all along to think that the RAF could be bombed into submission. Fighter Command's airfields were almost entirely grass fields, and an extraordinary number of bombs need to be dropped evenly across them to leave no space at all for fighters to land. While airfield buildings could be destroyed, improvisation and an excellent logistics system meant that equipment and material could be quickly replaced, and only once was a Fighter Command station closed for more than a few hours due to enemy action during the battle.

Fighter Command's command and control system was extensive and dispersed over a wide area. Radar stations were hard to

# WAAFs AT WAR

THE WOMEN'S AUXILIARY AIR FORCE (WAAF) FORMED IN 1939. DURING THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN IT PROVED TO BE A VITAL PART OF THE RAF

The Women's Royal Air Force (WRAF) had existed from 1918-1920 before falling foul of defence cuts. In 1939 a new WAAF was formed from RAF companies of the Auxiliary Territorial Service. Although they carried out traditional 'women's' domestic and clerical work, they also staffed operations rooms, radar sites and barrage balloon units.

The Battle of Britain showed the WAAF to be a highly valuable resource, and soon women were also engaged in technical and engineering trades (as the WRAF had been), working on aircraft and heavy equipment.

Although Corporal Daphne Pearson had already won the George Cross in May 1940 for rescuing crew members from a burning bomber, the Battle of Britain would give the WAAF a chance to prove their courage under fire en masse. During the Battle of Britain six WAAFs would be awarded Military Medals, three of them at RAF Biggin Hill.

On 18 August 1940, Sergeant Elizabeth Mortimer stayed at her post in the station armoury during an air raid, manning a telephone switchboard that was vital for co-ordinating the defence of the station. Despite being ordered to take cover, she sat through the air raid, and then

joined teams planting red flags by unexploded bombs, so that landing pilots could avoid them.

On 30 August the station was attacked again and two air raid shelters were hit by bombs. In one, 39 ground staff were killed, while in the other one WAAF was killed and many more were buried alive for several hours until rescued. On 31 August yet another raid hit Biggin Hill and two WAAFs, Sergeant Helen Turner (ex-WRAF) and Corporal Elspeth Henderson, both ignored orders to take shelter and remained at their posts in the operations room. As bombs fell around them, they kept the crucial lines of communication open.

**"DESPITE BEING ORDERED TO TAKE COVER, SHE SAT THROUGH THE AIR RAID, AND THEN JOINED TEAMS PLANTING RED FLAGS NEXT TO UNEXPLODED BOMBS"**



WAAFs Joan E. Mortimer, Elspeth C. Henderson and Helen E. Turner, who all received the Military Medal for their actions under fire at RAF Biggin Hill

*Some of 'The Few', none of whom would have been able to take off without the efforts of 'The Many'*



destroy, due to the resilient structure of the radar masts – blast waves mostly went straight through them – and the small size of the huts where the operators and equipment sat. The vital filter rooms and different level operations rooms, which sifted and made sense of incoming information and directed aircraft accordingly, were also small, dispersed and sometimes underground.

Likewise the logistics network that repaired aircraft, replaced expendables (such as fuel, ammunition, oxygen and spare parts) and provided new aircraft was also massive and widely spread out. RAF Maintenance Command consisted of four groups, plus some ancillary units. No. 40 Group had some 23 depots amounting to 790,000 square metres (8.5 million square feet) to contain and issue equipment of all types, from trucks to button sticks. No. 41 Group had 11 storage depots holding and issuing spare aircraft, the flow of which greatly increased as British aircraft production tripled in the first half of 1940.

Supporting them was the Air Transport Auxiliary, a civilian organisation that flew aircraft from factory to depot, and then from depot to frontline station. In June 1940 it had about 100 pilots who were in some way ineligible for RAF service; some were foreign, some were over-age, and one-fifth were women. By the end of the battle, its strength had grown to 250 pilots and 350 aircrew and support staff, who freed up RAF pilots to join frontline units.

No. 42 Group was responsible for the storage, movement and issue of munitions, oxygen and fuel, all of which were crucial to keep aircraft flying and fighting. It had 95

## **“WRECK RECOVERY HAD TO BE CONTRACTED OUT TO ANY CIVILIAN ORGANISATION WITH SUITABLE VEHICLES, INCLUDING DELIVERY AND REMOVALS FIRMS LIKE PICKFORDS”**

fuel depots and five munitions dumps spread around the country, and the handling and transportation of all of these commodities was dangerous and skilled work.

No. 43 Group dealt with repair and salvage. Supported by the Civilian Repair Organisation, the 35 units of the group were spread around the country to provide the men and equipment for the repair of aircraft that were too damaged to be patched up by their own ground crews. They also oversaw the collection of wrecked aircraft. Crashed RAF aircraft were of course prioritised – not only would wrecked British aircraft littering the countryside be bad for public morale, but they could also be stripped for parts that could be refurbished and reused, and the rest of the materials sent for recycling.

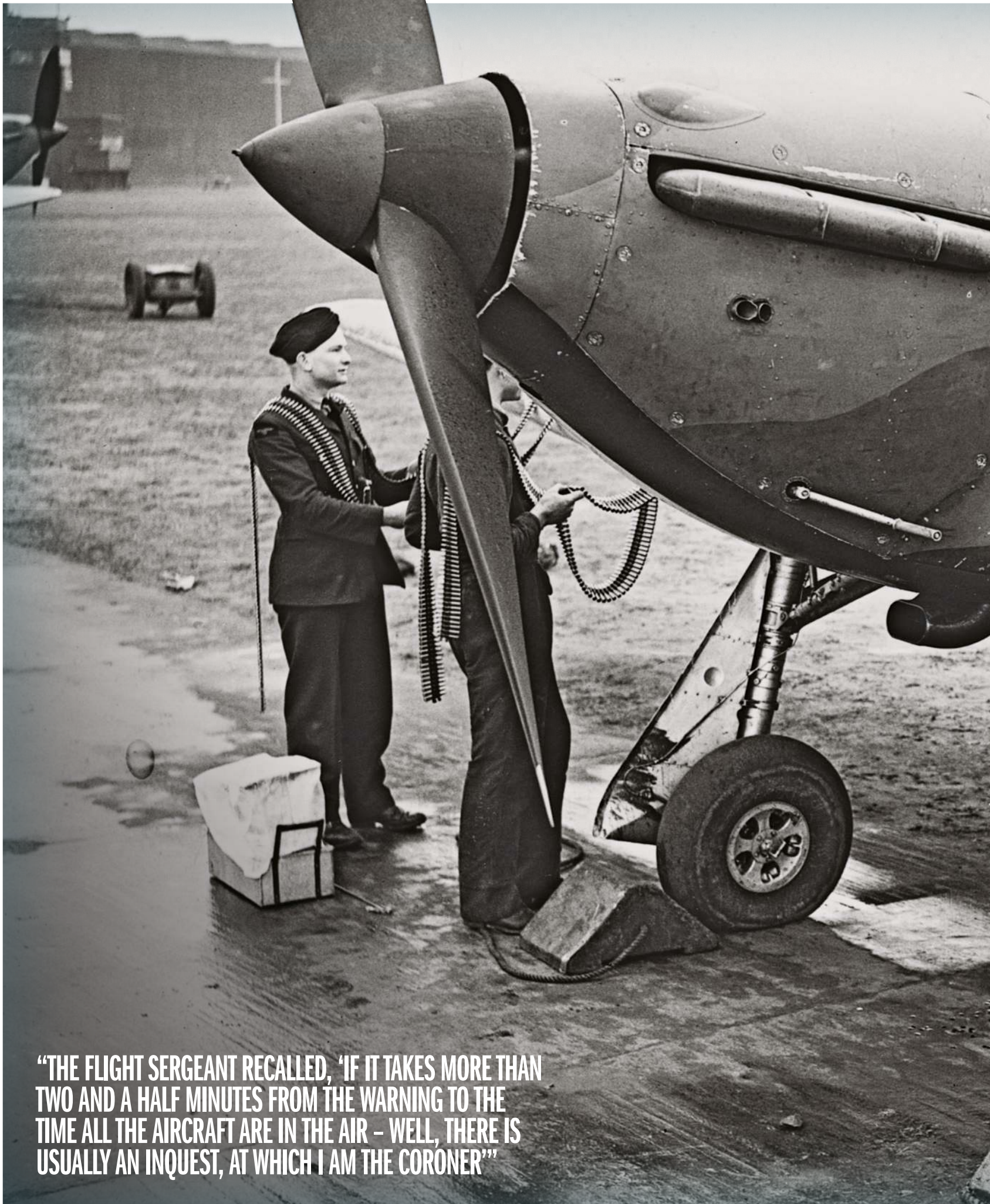
Downed German aircraft would be assessed for intelligence value. During the battle, the demand for salvage crews outstripped the RAF's resources, so much so that wreck recovery had to be contracted out any to civilian organisation with suitable vehicles, including delivery and removals firms like Pickfords.

### **Into action**

In the summer of 1940, the day started well before dawn for fighter station ground staff. They could be hauling themselves out of bed as early as between 3am-4am, dressing and going to the canteen for breakfast. Then they would prepare their station or squadron for action.

The personnel dedicated to caring for aircraft would set about preparing 'their' aircraft. Each fighter had a dedicated two-man ground crew – a rigger and a fitter. A flight sergeant with No. 249 Squadron recalled that, "Each aircraft had its own crew. As a result everybody is very proud of the fighter in his charge. And a healthy rivalry develops, too. They are like the boys in racing stables who groom their own particular horse, call it pet names, slap it affectionately and kiss it when it wins a race... Once a pilot came back from a battle after shooting down a Junkers 88 and two Messerschmitts. The crew that serviced that Hurricane did a war dance and went about swanking to the other crews. They regarded the three at one crack as THEIR work."

Crews would remove canopy and wing covers, then start the engine to warm it up, before conducting basic checks. Specialists who cared for particular parts of several aircraft – armourers, instrument fitters and wireless mechanics among others – would also do their rounds. Starter motors could be plugged in to make sure the aircraft could be instantly started and running by the time a scrambling pilot arrived. The same flight sergeant recalled, "If it takes more than two-and-a-half minutes from the warning to the time all the aircraft are in the air – well, there is usually an inquest, at which I am the coroner."



**“THE FLIGHT SERGEANT RECALLED, ‘IF IT TAKES MORE THAN TWO AND A HALF MINUTES FROM THE WARNING TO THE TIME ALL THE AIRCRAFT ARE IN THE AIR - WELL, THERE IS USUALLY AN INQUEST, AT WHICH I AM THE CORONER’”**



*Armourers reload a Hawker Hurricane with belts of ammunition. Spitfires could be re-armed with pre-loaded magazines, which was faster, but some had to be fed in from below*



# CASUALTIES

## 13 AUGUST 1940 'ADLER TAG'

Fighter Command aircrew	15
Bomber Command aircrew	52
Coastal Command aircrew	0
Training Command aircrew	0
All Commands ground crew	96

## 16 AUGUST 1940

Fighter Command aircrew	22
Bomber Command aircrew	16
Coastal Command aircrew	1
Training Command aircrew	0
All Commands ground crew	43

## 18 AUGUST 1940 'THE HARDEST DAY'

Fighter Command aircrew	28
Bomber Command aircrew	2
Coastal Command aircrew	0
Training Command aircrew	1
All Commands ground crew	37

<b>COMBAT CASUALTIES</b>	15	2
	52	9
	0	0
	0	3
	96	3
<b>NON-COMBAT CASUALTIES</b>	22	2
	16	0
	1	0
	0	2
	43	3
<b>COMBAT CASUALTIES</b>	28	2
	2	7
	0	0
	1	1
	37	1



After a long, tense wait, their aircraft would hopefully return, when more minutes of frantic activity followed, even if it was not damaged. The anonymous flight sergeant also said, "As soon as the first one lands it taxis towards the waiting ground crew. A tanker goes alongside to fill up the petrol tanks. At the same time the armourers re-arm the eight Browning guns. The rigger changes the oxygen bottles and fits the starting-motor to the aircraft so that it is ready for the next take-off. Then the rigger takes some strips of fabric which he has brought with him from the crew-room and places them over the gun holes. It helps keep the guns clean and also helps to keep the aircraft 100 per cent efficient in the air until the guns are fired.

"Meanwhile, another member of the crew searches the aircraft for bullet holes, and the electrician goes over the wiring and the wireless mechanic tests the radio set. Every little part of the aircraft is OK before the machine is pronounced serviceable again. All this process should take no more than five minutes, but we allow seven minutes for the whole job... Once we serviced a squadron which came back more or less together in eight and a half minutes.

"If a Hurricane comes down with a few bullet holes, it is my job to see if the injuries are superficial or not. If there are holes through the fabric, we quickly patch them up. If there is a bullet thought the main spar, then it is a case of a new wing."

In between these periods of intense activity, while the pilots waited for the call to scramble or tried to unwind after landing, the ground crews would still be busy. Work would be carried out to make grounded aircraft airworthy

**"THE LOUDSPEAKER... APPEALED, 'TAKE COVER! TAKE COVER!' WITHIN THREE MINUTES OF THAT WARNING I SAW THE FIRST OF THE JUNKERS COMING STRAIGHT DOWN ON THE 'DROME IN A VERTICAL DIVE'"**

again, routine maintenance would be done on the aircraft that were not flying (even on the busiest of days it was unlikely the whole squadron would fly at once), bomb craters could be filled in, and preparations made for the next scramble. In quiet moments a cup of tea and a sandwich ('char and a wad') might be grabbed from the canteen or a NAAFI van.

While the ground crews worked on the aircraft, the other ground staff at the station would carry on their routine tasks to keep the airfield running. Cooks, cleaners and maintenance staff would go about their daily routines. Clerks would sort, complete and send off the paperwork that would keep crucial supplies and replacement parts flowing in. Days over that summer would be long, exhausting marathons until the sun slipped beneath the horizon. The flight sergeant recalled, "Finally, at nightfall, we make the daily inspection. The armourers clean the guns, the fitter checks the engine over, the rigger checks round the fuselage and cleans it, and the wireless man checks the radio set. The instruments man

checks the instruments. When everything is OK and the necessary papers signed, then the machine can be put to bed. The sleeves are put on the wings, the cover is put over the cockpit, the pickets are pegged into the ground and the machine left, heading into the wind, until dawn... During the summer-time our hours are from about 3.30am until 10.30pm."

Between 13 August-6 September 1940, the ground installations of the RAF were the Luftwaffe's main target. During this period, and to a lesser extent even afterwards, the ground crews at sites in southern England often had to work under air attack, and sporadic attacks were made on stations further north too.

On many of these days the ground crews suffered higher casualties than the aircrews, and some stations were badly damaged. On 16 August, RAF Tangmere was targeted: LAC Maurice Haffenden, an engine fitter with No. 43 Squadron, recalled, "At 1pm the loudspeaker, with a greater urgency than before, suddenly appealed, 'Take cover! Take cover!' Within three minutes of that warning I saw the first of the Junkers coming straight down on the 'drome in a vertical dive. The leader was within 2,000 feet (610 metres) of the ground – long wing span – fixed undercarriage – single engine – and then w-h-e-e-z... I went head-first down a manhole as the first bomb landed on the cookhouse. For seven minutes their 1,000-pounders were scoring direct hits and everything was swept away by machine gun bullets. I never believed such desolation and destruction to be possible. Everything is wrecked – the hangars, the stores, the hospital, the armoury, the cookhouses, the canteen – well, everything."



The magnificent Battle of Britain Memorial on the Embankment in London, which acknowledges the large support network behind the pilots



Apprentices at RAF Halton, 1939. These men would be vital to the following year's victory in the Battle of Britain

Squadron Leader Sandy Johnstone of No. 602 Squadron, based at nearby RAF Westhampnett, visited Tangmere that evening and "found the place in utter shambles, with wisps of smoke still rising from the shattered buildings. Little knots of people were wandering about with dazed looks on their faces, obviously deeply affected by the events of the day. I eventually tracked down the station commander standing on the lawn in front of the officer's mess with a parrot sitting on his shoulder. Jack was covered with grime and the wretched bird was screeching its imitation of a Stuka at the height of the attack! The once-immaculate grass was littered with personal belongings which had been blasted from the wing which had received a direct hit. Shirts, towels, socks and a portable gramophone – a little private world for all to see... Rubble was everywhere and all three hangars had been wrecked."

A total of 19 ground staff were killed at Tangmere, but despite the damage the station remained operational. Only RAF Manston would be closed for any extended period of time, after repeated heavy raids. The story of what has become known as the 'Manston Mutiny' was recounted by Len Deighton in his 1977 book *Fighter*, where it is said members of the ground staff refused to leave shelters and had to be forced out at gunpoint. There is no evidence for this at all. Deighton has always refused to reveal his source, and no other evidence has ever come to light.

### 'Spirit of Dunkirk'

In fact, morale held up incredibly well in most areas. It is tempting to look back on 1940's

## "THE DEEP, SNARLING ROAR OF THE BOMBERS AND THE PROTECTING FIGHTERS GREW CLOSER AND CLOSER TILL THE WHOLE HUT VIBRATED"

'Spirit of Dunkirk', or later the 'Blitz Spirit' with scepticism, wondering how much is myth based on propaganda. But there is plenty of evidence of the nation pulling together.

An anonymous WAAF at Rye Radar Station witnessed this stoicism when her site was bombed on 13 August: "The deep, snarling roar of the bombers and the protecting fighters grew closer and closer till the whole hut vibrated with it. The Watch continued steadily giving height and speed and direction of attacking hostile aircraft to Fighter Command without a tremor in their voices. Suddenly the RAF Officer-in-Charge called; "They're diving! Get down!" and only then did those airwomen move, and they moved as if you'd pressed a button! We all fell flat on the floor as the first stick of bombs burst... Everything loose shot off the tables, shutters were blown in, and glass flew in every direction. The floor and hut shuddered, and chairs and tables overturned on to us. Through clouds of dust I saw legs and arms protruding from underneath the debris; to those in reach I gave a friendly pat and an assurance that they were all right and must remain still... At last, after what seemed like hours, we dared to raise our heads... What a scene of wreckage and devastation it was!

## GROUND STAFF

NOT ALL STATION PERSONNEL WORKED DIRECTLY ON KEEPING THE AIRCRAFT FLYING, BUT THEY ALL PLAYED THEIR PART IN KEEPING THE FIGHTER PILOTS FIGHTING

### PARACHUTE PACKERS

Male and female packers maintained and carefully packed the parachutes that could save a crew member's life. One slight slip in packing or a missed minor fault could have disastrous results.

### BATMEN

Batmen looked after the officers in their quarters, waking them and bringing their morning tea, taking care of their laundry, and other domestic chores – small matters, but they eased the otherwise stress-filled life of a pilot.

### COOKS

Never underestimate the physical and mental boost that comes from a hot meal or cup of tea. For air and ground crews working intense, 18-hour days, a constant stream of sustenance was vital.

### FIREMEN

A fireman's job was a dangerous one, whether putting out fires in bombed buildings or trying to rescue crews from crashed and burning aircraft. In either case, unexploded bombs or ammunition could 'cook off' at any second.

### WIRELESS & TELEPHONE OPERATORS

Fast and efficient communications were the cornerstone of the RAF's success. Whether directing pilots in the air or calling a depot for crucial parts and materials, they were critical to keeping the system functional.



The interior of a radar station, part of the network spread along the UK's south and east coasts

Armourers re-arming a Supermarine Spitfire at RAF Hawkinge, July 1940. Some of the Spitfire's guns had to be loaded from below, an awkward operation



**“THE NOISE FROM THE EXPLOSIONS GOING ON AROUND US WAS TERRIFYING, BUT NOT ONE OF THOSE MAGNIFICENT MEN FALTERED FOR A MOMENT IN THEIR TASKS”**

“The Station buildings were all wrecked... and there were enormous craters all over the place. But... we were back on the air in twenty minutes,” she recounted.

Sergeant Iain Hutchinson was a pilot with No. 54 Squadron at RAF Hornchurch, and witnessed another example of the strong team spirit: “The airfield was under attack and chunks of shrapnel were raining down on the airfield. When I taxied towards the dispersal no one was to be seen; they were all in the air-raid shelters taking cover. Before I rolled to a halt and cut the engine, ‘B’ Flight ground crew, under their flight sergeant, were swarming around my Spitfire; the bowser was racing out to refuel the aircraft, while the armament men, laden with ammunition, were reloading the guns. The noise from the explosions going on around us was terrifying, but not one of those magnificent men faltered for a moment in their tasks. I was frankly relieved to be taking off again.”

Of course, there were limits though. Jack Shenfield, a mechanic with the same squadron at RAF Hornchurch, also witnessed a more pragmatic approach in action: “I got into the shelter, we were all packed in there, and the sergeant had closed the door. We had been only in there a minute or so when there was a banging at the door. He opened the door and it was the driver of the Bowser; this was the vehicle that carried all the high-octane petrol for the aircraft. He’d parked the thing outside the shelter with all the bombs falling all around. The sergeant said, ‘Sod off, and take that bloody thing with you, and park it somewhere else before you blow us all to pieces.’ The driver had to go back and park it before they’d let him into the shelter.”

Such human lapses aside, the efforts of the RAF’s ground crew and ground staff during the Battle of Britain formed an incredibly strong foundation on which the aircrews could operate.

Especially during the period between 13 August-7 September, the RAF’s infrastructure and ground personnel were the main target of the Germans, although of course raids were made on airfields and radar sites before that, and would continue to be made (albeit on a smaller scale) afterwards. In fact, in some ways the raids became more dangerous, as large, easily spotted and tracked formations of bombers gave way to individual aircraft or small formations that arrived at low level and high speed. Little or no warning could be made for these raiders, and personnel were regularly caught out in the open without a chance to

reach shelter. For example, ATA pilot Lettice Curtis would recall being caught in the open as she walked across Hatfield Airfield, near the de Havilland factory, on 3 October 1940: “As so often happened, the air raid warning and the bombs came at the same instant and one bomb fell very near indeed to those running from the office to the shelters. Luckily for them it did not explode on impact, otherwise we would almost certainly have lost, amongst others, Pauline Gower, our Commanding Officer, who was nearest to the bomb at the time.

One of the bombs, however, did land on a factory workshop and 21 people were killed and some 70 were injured. The bombs had been dropped from around 100 feet (30 metres) and the pilot had machine-gunned the workers running to the shelters.”

That aircraft, a Ju-88a of 1/KG77, dropped four bombs, one of which failed to explode, but the element of surprise allowed it to achieve a disproportionate effect (even if it was almost immediately shot down and the crew captured).

Although the direct attacks on stations decreased, the Battle of Britain would still rage for two more long, exhausting months before the Germans switched to night attacks. Though the danger decreased somewhat, the long hours and gruelling pace of work did not. The outnumbered fighter pilots who would climb repeatedly into their aircraft to take to the skies and defend the nation could do so with the knowledge that they were the sharp point of a vast, well-trained and efficient machine intended to put them in the right place at the right time, and with their aircraft in the best possible condition to fight.

## GPO

### THE GENERAL POST OFFICE WAS ANOTHER PART IN THE INTRICATE SYSTEM

The General Post Office (GPO) owned the telephone lines, exchanges and other equipment that were crucial to binding together the RAF’s command and control system, as well as its day-to-day activities. Its staff carried out vital maintenance and repair work, often while the stations and radar sites they were supporting were under attack. Without their efforts, RAF Fighter Command would have lost its key edge: the ability to gather and disseminate information, and then direct its aircraft to enemy formations.



## TIMELINE

### Battle of Britain

**18<sup>th</sup> June 1940**

Churchill states Battle of Britain about to begin

**3<sup>rd</sup> July 2015**

75 days to "Battle of Britain" day

**10<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

Official start of the battle

**19<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

Dover attacks almost destroy RAF Squadron

**13<sup>th</sup> August 1940**

Eagle Day - start of massive Luftwaffe raids

**20<sup>th</sup> August 1940**

Churchill's speech "Never in the field..."

**25<sup>th</sup> August 1940**

Raid on Berlin

**15<sup>th</sup> September 1940**

Battle of Britain day

# THE AIRCRAFT OF THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN

On June 18th 1940, Winston Churchill informed the House of Commons that the Battle of France was over and he expected the Battle of Britain to begin. Britain was standing alone against the might of the Third Reich and would be forced to fight for her very survival. Luckily, before the Wehrmacht could launch an invasion across the English Channel, they needed to secure superiority in the air and they would not have it all their own way!

Over the next few months, the young pilots of Fighter Command would be forced into aerial battles with their Luftwaffe adversaries, facing odds of 4 to 1 against them. Day after day, hundreds of German aircraft came and each time they did, RAF Spitfires and Hurricanes repelled them. Although they came perilously close to defeat, Churchill's 'Few' managed to save Britain and with it, write one of the most glorious chapters in our nation's history.

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**ELLIPTICAL WING**

The elliptical wing design of the He 70 'Blitz', the predecessor of the He 111, was retained, although the surfaces were lengthened to provide more lift for the He 111.

# HEINKEL

The Luftwaffe's Heinkel He 111 medium bomber gained notoriety during the Battle of Britain & proved versatile in multiple roles

WORDS MIKE HASKEW

**AERODYNAMIC AND LIGHTWEIGHT**

The surfaces of the He 111 aircraft were designed for maximum aerodynamic efficiency, while its construction from aluminium and wood provided strength and reasonable weight.

**BOMBLOAD**

The He 111 was capable of carrying multiple bombload configurations, including 2,000 kilograms (4,409 pounds) in the bomb bay and 3,600 kilograms (7,937 pounds) affixed to external hard points.

**WING EDGES**

The trailing edges of the He 111 wings were angled slightly forward, while the leading edges were swept back on a line even with the engine nacelles.

The terms of the Treaty of Versailles were explicit: in the wake of World War I, the German military was to have no air force capable of offensive action. However, during the 1930s, just as it did with the army, the Nazi regime developed a shadow air force, one that would wreak havoc across Europe by the end of the decade. The Germans established glider 'clubs' to train future Luftwaffe pilots, and at the same time embarked on a program that would ostensibly produce aircraft for civilian purposes – but with an easy transition to military applications when war came.

The Heinkel He 111, perhaps the best-known German medium bomber of World War II, which gained infamy in the skies above Poland, France, the Low Countries and Britain, was such an aircraft. Originally slated for service as a passenger liner for the civilian Lufthansa, the He 111 was large, robust and built for rapid conversion to a bomber configuration.

The Reich Air Ministry promoted competition among aircraft manufacturers, and Heinkel emerged with a contract for a medium bomber based on its proven single-engine He 70 design, which had already set speed records and served as a fast passenger and mail delivery plane. Concurrently, two other medium bombers, the Dornier Do 17 and the Junkers Ju 88, were developed for the Luftwaffe.

Aircraft designer Ernst Heinkel recruited twin brothers Siegfried and Walter Günter to work in his factory at Rostock, and the two produced a twin-engine adaptation of the He 70, which later became distinctive with a glazed nose, elliptical wings and extended fuselage. The first He 111 prototype flew on 24 February 1935 as a civilian aircraft, and the design was affirmed. In January 1936, another prototype was recognised as the fastest passenger aircraft in the world, achieving a top speed of 402 kilometres per hour (250 miles per hour).

**HEINKEL HE 111**

**COMMISSIONED:** 1935 **ORIGIN:** GERMANY  
**LENGTH:** 16.4M (53FT 10IN) **CREW:** 5  
**RANGE:** 1,950KM (1,212MI)  
**ENGINE:** 2X 1,340HP JUNKERS JUMO 211  
**INVERTED V-12 PETROL**  
**PRIMARY WEAPON:** 1X 2,000KG (4,409LB)  
**BOMB EXTERNAL AND 1X 500KG (1,102LB)**  
**BOMB INTERNAL; OR 8X 250KG 551LB (551LB)**  
**BOMBS INTERNAL**  
**SECONDARY WEAPONS:** 1X 20MM MG FF  
**CANNON; 1X 13MM MG 131 MACHINE GUN; 7X**  
**7.92MM MG 15 OR MG 81 MACHINE GUNS**





*The distinctive nose of the He 111 made the aircraft easily distinguishable in the skies above wartime Europe*

## COCKPIT

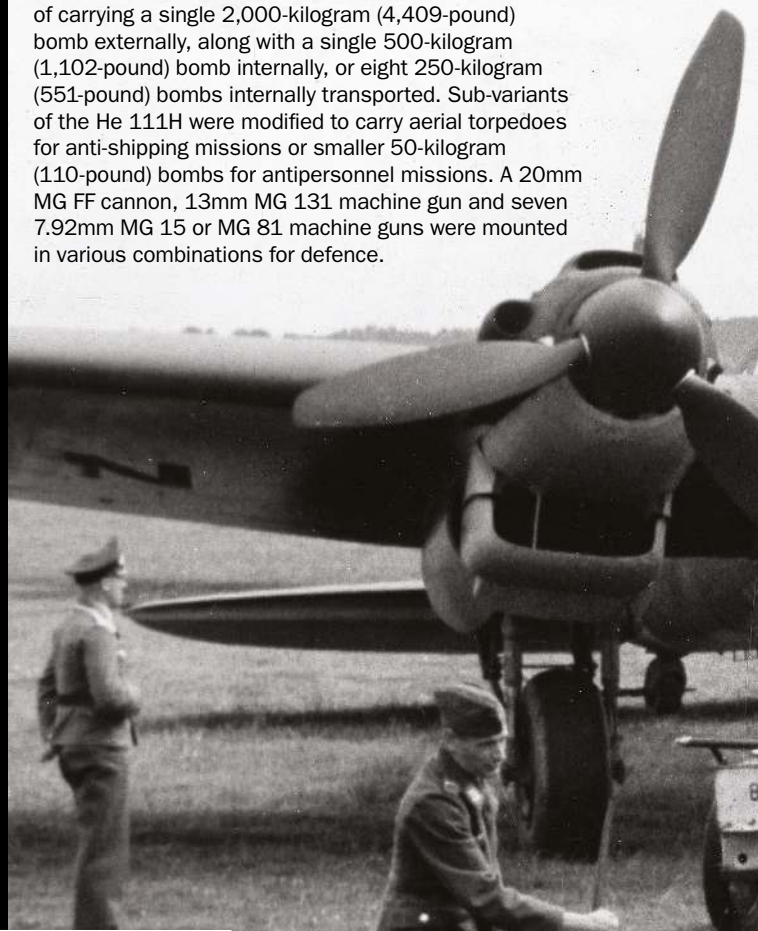
Early He 111s were built with stepped cockpits with windscreen panels for the pilot and co-pilot. This was abandoned in the P series for a stepless configuration. The pilot sat on the left with the bombardier/navigator on the right. The pedals for the rudder were placed on arms, and there was no floor below the pilot's feet. Sliding panels were installed to allow quick exit forward rather than through the fuselage, and the glazed Plexiglas nose provided excellent visibility, although bright sunlight could cause glare. The control column was centrally positioned and could be swung to the right. Most of the instrumentation was installed in the ceiling above the pilot's head.



*In later variants of the He 111, a stepped cockpit was replaced with a stepless configuration, with the pilot seated on the left and the bombardier/navigator to his immediate right*

## ARMAMENT

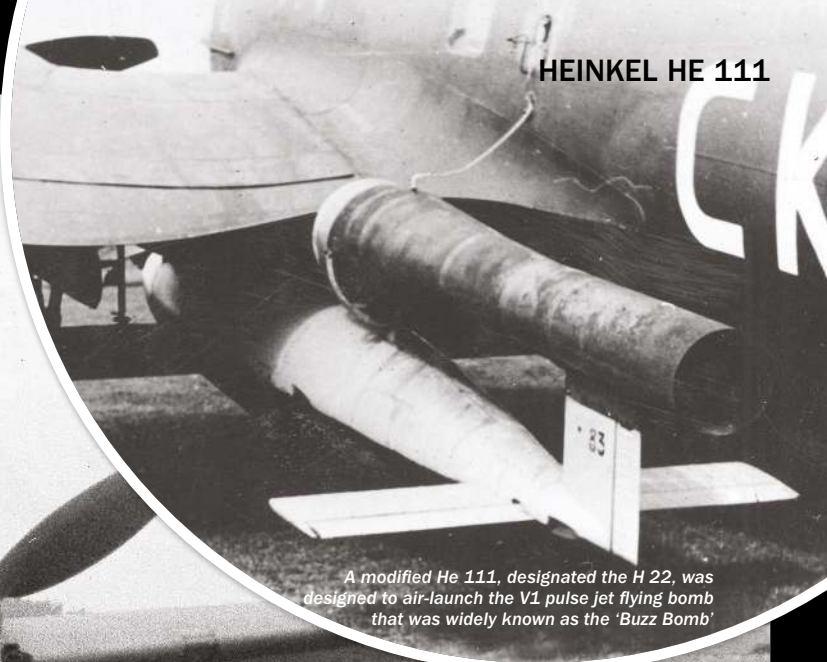
The primary weapons system of the He 111 was its bombload, which included several options based on the nature of its mission. The aircraft was capable of carrying a single 2,000-kilogram (4,409-pound) bomb externally, along with a single 500-kilogram (1,102-pound) bomb internally, or eight 250-kilogram (551-pound) bombs internally transported. Sub-variants of the He 111H were modified to carry aerial torpedoes for anti-ship missions or smaller 50-kilogram (110-pound) bombs for antipersonnel missions. A 20mm MG FF cannon, 13mm MG 131 machine gun and seven 7.92mm MG 15 or MG 81 machine guns were mounted in various combinations for defence.



*Ground crewmen handle a variety of ordnance as they arm a He 111 for an upcoming mission. The aircraft was capable of handling high explosive, incendiary and other types of ordnance*



**“A 20MM MG FF CANNON, 13MM MG 131 MACHINE GUN AND SEVEN 7.92MM MG15 OR MG 81 MACHINE GUNS WERE MOUNTED IN VARIOUS COMBINATIONS FOR DEFENCE”**

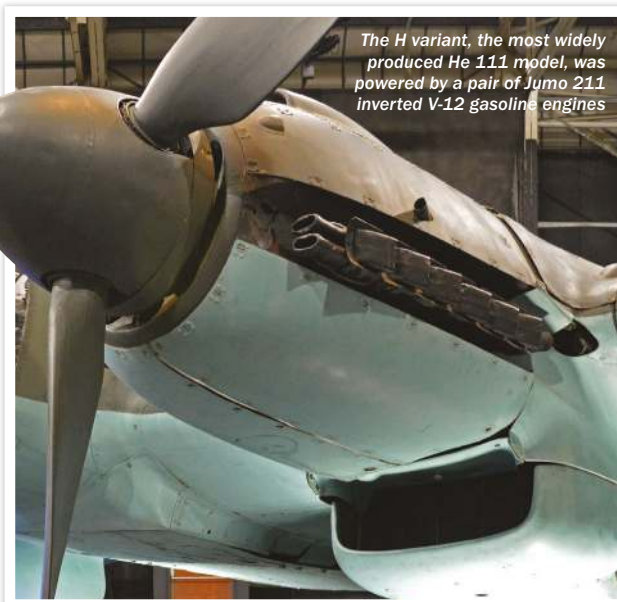


*A modified He 111, designated the H 22, was designed to air-launch the V1 pulse jet flying bomb that was widely known as the 'Buzz Bomb'*



# ENGINE

The He 111 was powered by several aircraft engines, including the BMW VI V-12 inline, the Daimler Benz DB 600 and DB 601 inverted V-12 powerplants, and the Junkers Jumo 211 series. The He 111H was the most widely produced variant of the medium bomber and mounted a pair of Jumo 211 inverted V-12 gasoline engines, generating from 1,300 to 1,340 horsepower and producing a maximum speed of 440 kilometres per hour (273 miles per hour). While its competitor, the DB 600, mainly powered fighters, the Jumo 211 was primarily a bomber engine utilising a direct fuel injection system, and was improved throughout World War II.



The H variant, the most widely produced He 111 model, was powered by a pair of Jumo 211 inverted V-12 gasoline engines



Ground mechanics have removed one of the engines from this He 111 to perform maintenance. Note the inverted engine configuration

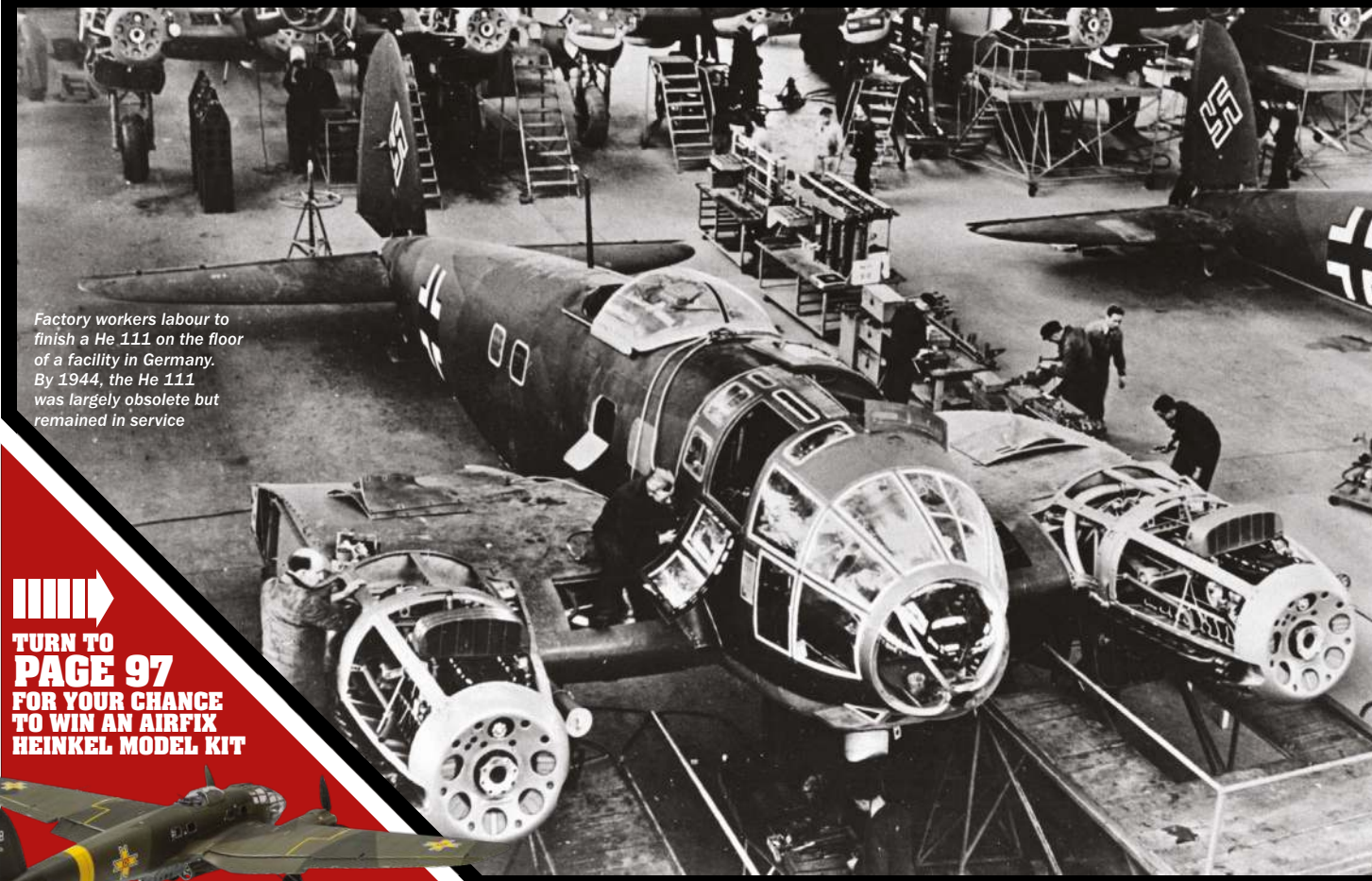


Ernst Heinkel (right) with Siegfried Günter, working to perfect the design of the He 111

# DESIGN



The Günter brothers based their He 111 design on the proven He 70 Blitz. As a twin-engine version of its predecessor, the He 111 was often called the Doppel Blitz, or 'Double Lightning'. The aircraft kept the elliptical wing design, although the surfaces were lengthened, and the extended fuselage could accommodate passengers and later a payload of bombs. The original BMW VI engines were deemed underpowered, giving way to the Daimler and then Junkers models. A single vertical fin was somewhat oversized for the aircraft's profile; however, all surfaces were designed for maximum aerodynamics. The defensive machine guns were located in the nose and in flexible dorsal, ventral and lateral positions.



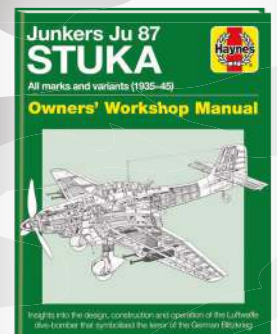
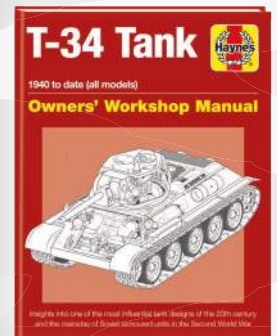
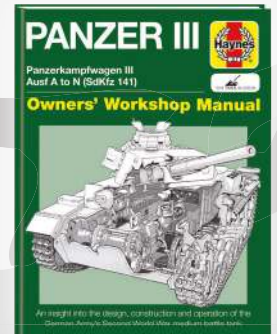
Factory workers labour to finish a He 111 on the floor of a facility in Germany. By 1944, the He 111 was largely obsolete but remained in service

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A Heinkel He 111 flies over Wapping, east London, during the Luftwaffe's first raid targetting the British capital, 7 September 1940

**“OF THE 34 LUFTWAFFE AIR GROUPS COMMITTED TO THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN, 15 WERE EQUIPPED WITH THE HE 111”**

## SERVICE HISTORY

**THE HEINKEL HE 111 MEDIUM BOMBER SAW ACTION IN ALL THEATRES OF WORLD WAR II IN WHICH THE LUFTWAFFE OPERATED**

The Heinkel He 111 entered civilian air service with Lufthansa in 1936. When the German war machine smashed across the Polish frontier on 1 September 1939, formations of the medium bombers flew overhead, striking both tactical and strategic targets. During the Polish Campaign, the Luftwaffe deployed about 700 operational He 111s of the early P variant, the first to include the glazed cockpit and flight deck for which the aircraft is well known.

Initial prototypes had already been sold to China during the 1930s, while the He 111 experienced its combat debut with the Condor Legion during the Spanish Civil War in 1936. More than 70 variants and subvariants of the He 111 were developed during a production run that extended to the autumn of 1944, and approximately 8,000 civilian and military aircraft were produced. The terror bombing of the Dutch city of Rotterdam on 14 May 1940 was executed by He 111s of Kampfgeschwader (Bomber Wing) 54.

By the time of the Battle of Britain in 1940, the He 111H was the primary model in service and bore the brunt of the missions. Of the 34

Luftwaffe air groups committed to the Battle of Britain, 15 were equipped with the He 111. The aircraft proved capable of taking terrific punishment and returning to base, although its defensive armament was deemed inadequate, while airspeed was slowed significantly when fully loaded.

By early 1943, the He 111 had become functionally obsolescent with the introduction of new Luftwaffe designs and growing Allied air superiority. However, the aircraft remained in service through to the end of the conflict. In addition to tactical and strategic bombing, it was employed in a torpedo configuration, towed glider aircraft, and was modified to carry the HS 293 missile. The last He 111 retired from service in Spain in 1975.



Heinkel He 111s move towards a target. The He 111 was a mainstay of the Battle of Britain, and sustained heavy losses



# HAYREDDIN BARBAROSSA

This predator of the seas rose from corsair captain to grand admiral, becoming a master of galley warfare

WORDS WILLIAM E. WELSH

Shouts of joy rose from the docks of the port of Mahon in the Balearic Islands on an October day in 1535, as the galleys of a powerful squadron flying Spanish flags glided into the turquoise waters of the harbour. Church bells tolled a hearty welcome, and a Portuguese caravel lying at anchor fired a salute to welcome the triumphant squadron.

Four months earlier, the Spanish king, Charles I, had led a great armada to Tunis. In a month-long battle, he drove Turkish Grand Admiral Hayreddin Barbarossa from the port. The notorious Barbarossa was rumoured to be dead. The inhabitants of the Balearic Islands had suffered mightily as targets of the red-bearded corsair's raids in the preceding years, and they celebrated his demise with relish.

Suddenly the arriving galleys began firing their bow cannons at the caravel. Shock registered on the faces of the Christians on the quay and aboard the caravel.

Swarms of Turkish troops emerged from their hiding places behind the bulwarks of the galleys. They clambered up the sides of the Portuguese caravel and thronged onto the quay. By then the inhabitants of Mahon had discerned that the Spanish flags were a ruse. The commander of the squadron was not a friendly Spanish admiral but the fearsome Barbarossa. The Ottoman admiral stayed long enough to round up 1,800 Christian captives to be sold in the slave markets of Algiers.

Just before he departed, the burly Ottoman admiral left a note pinned to the tail of a horse. "I am the thunderbolt of heaven," the

note boldly stated. "My vengeance will not be assuaged until I have killed the last one of you and enslaved your women, your daughters and your children."

## Spanish presidios

Following the conclusion of the Spanish Reconquista, which ended with the subjugation of the Emirate of Granada in 1492, the more than 500,000 Muslims living in Spain faced increasing pressure to convert to Christianity. In 1502 Queen Isabella of Castile issued them an ultimatum: convert to Christianity or leave Spain. The departing Moors found their way by boat to the Maghreb (literally meaning 'the west'), the region that included modern Morocco, Algeria and Tunis. The Europeans called this area the Barbary Coast.

The Maghreb at that time was experiencing a power vacuum. The three Berber kingdoms in existence at the outset of the 16th century were in steep decline. Unrest existed between the Berbers and the Arabs living in the region. The arrival of the Spanish Moors in the Maghreb, coupled with the emergence of corsairs from the Levant, further de-stabilised the region. The Berber kings could do little to discourage the corsairs, who operated not only from ports and harbours, but also from coves and inlets along the 1,900 kilometres (1,200 miles) of Maghreb coastline. The corsairs posed a threat to Spanish shipping, as well as coastal towns and villages throughout Spain, Italy and the nearby islands.

The guiding force behind the Spanish initiative to establish a string of fortified

outposts, or presidios, along the Maghreb coast to deter the corsairs was Archbishop Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros, who swore to Queen Isabella that he would do his utmost to stamp out the corsair threat.

Jiménez's containment policy reached its pinnacle between 1508 and 1510 when skilled military engineer Count Pedro Navarro oversaw the capture of half a dozen key ports, including Algiers, Tripoli and Tunis, as well as the construction of presidios at locations where their guns could command the harbour. Some of the more famous presidios were built atop rocky islands, known as peñóns.

Following Isabella's death, Jiménez kept King Ferdinand focused on the containment policy. When Spanish King Charles I (the future Habsburg Holy Roman Emperor Charles V) took the throne in 1516, he inherited the corsair problem.

## War in the Maghreb

In 1502 two brothers, Oruç and Khizr, arrived in Tunis to prey on Latin shipping. Like other Ottoman corsairs, they used oared warships, known as galliots, which were miniature versions of the galley. A galliot had two lines of rowing benches, a lateen sail and a centreline bow cannon. In addition to the small crew, a galliot might have an average of 60 rowers and 40 soldiers.

Hailing from the Ottoman-controlled island of Lesbos, the brothers were sons of a former Ottoman soldier and his Greek Christian wife. Despite their mother's religion, they were raised as Muslims. Both brothers had red beards,

Portrait of Hayreddin  
Barbarossa from the  
16th century

## HAYREDDIN BARBAROSSA

Barbarossa is shown lavishly dressed as befits his position of grand admiral of the Ottoman Imperial Fleet. The barrel-chested former corsair sports the full red beard that prompted Europeans to call him Barbarossa (Redbeard). He wears a ceremonial turban that is decorated with jewels, topped by a miniature crown denoting his high rank. He also wears a surcoat adorned with the Ottoman crescent over a luxurious caftan with matching sash, under which is protection, consisting of a composite of mail with small plates protecting his torso. At his waist is a hawk-handled scimitar in a jewelled scabbard.

**"I AM THE THUNDERBOLT OF HEAVEN,  
MY VENGEANCE WILL NOT BE ASSUAGED  
UNTIL I HAVE KILLED THE LAST ONE OF  
YOU AND ENSLAVED YOUR WOMEN, YOUR  
DAUGHTERS AND YOUR CHILDREN"**

**– Hayreddin Barbarossa**

which prompted the Europeans to call them the 'Barbarossa' (redbeard) brothers. While living on Lesbos, Oruç had been captured by the Knights of St. John and forced to serve for three years as a galley slave. He escaped and returned to Lesbos with a burning hatred of Christians. Shortly thereafter, he and Khizr sailed to Tunis.

By dint of exhaustive raiding, the brothers amassed considerable wealth. During the period in which the Spanish established control of the principal ports of the Maghreb, the Barbarossas shifted their operations to Djerba, an island 480 kilometres (300 miles) south of Tunis with a deepwater lagoon on the west side that could shelter an entire fleet. Unlike in Tunis, they could operate in Djerba free of interference from local rulers. Although the heavily gunned Spanish vessels that prowled the Barbary Coast were too strong for the Barbarossas to engage, they focused their efforts instead on plundering vessels of Genoa, Tuscany, Sicily, Naples and the Papacy.

Oruç thirsted for greater power, and it proved his undoing. When the city of Bougie in central Maghreb requested assistance in ousting the Spanish, he made an amphibious attack against it in August 1512. While leading a charge through a breach in the city's walls, his arm was torn off by a cannonball.

Oruç received a silver prosthetic arm, and he continued fighting the Spanish in the hope of carving out his own fiefdom. He captured the ancient Maghreb capital of Tlemcen in 1516, but the Spanish viceroy of Oran, Diego de Vara, retook it after a six-month siege. Oruç fled with his followers, but the Spanish overtook them

**“WHILE LIVING ON LESBOS, ORUÇ HAD BEEN CAPTURED BY THE KNIGHTS OF ST. JOHN AND FORCED TO SERVE FOR THREE YEARS AS A GALLEY SLAVE. HE ESCAPED AND RETURNED TO LESBOS WITH A BURNING HATRED OF CHRISTIANS”**

and slaughtered them. De Vara sent Oruç's skull and crimson cloak to Spain, where they were displayed in Córdoba Cathedral. Following his brother's death, Khizr Barbarossa became the top sea wolf in the Mediterranean Sea.

### Bey of Algiers

Realising he was outgunned by the Spanish with their royal galleys and near-impregnable presidios, Barbarossa sent an envoy to Ottoman Sultan Selim I with an appeal for protection. Selim agreed in 1519 to accept Algiers as a sanjak, or province, in exchange for military support. This elevated Barbarossa to the post of bey of Algiers. He received 2,000 janissaries and 4,000 other troops, as well as artillery, to form the initial core of his provincial army. The following year Sultan Suleiman I succeeded Selim. He kept a watchful eye on Barbarossa to see how well he performed his duties.

Barbarossa had a broad chest, thick beard and dark, piercing eyes. He could be as brutal and sadistic as his late brother Oruç, but he also possessed sharp political skills. Unlike Oruç, Khizr had no desire to carve out his own fiefdom – he was entirely devoted to the Ottoman sultan. The most pressing problem he faced as bey of Algiers was how to drive the Spanish from the presidio that controlled Algiers harbour.

In August 1519, King Charles, who had been elected Holy Roman emperor two months earlier, dispatched the viceroy of Naples, Hugo de Moncada, with a Spanish fleet of 40 ships and 5,000 troops against the port-city of Algiers. The Spanish still held their presidio, known as the Peñón of Algiers, situated on a small islet 275 metres (300 yards) offshore from the picturesque port-city. Barbarossa repulsed Moncada's attempts to storm the port-city. A fierce gale also arose that wrecked 26 of the 40 Spanish ships. Moncada had no choice but to withdraw, leaving the Ottoman corsairs in possession of the city.

Restless Berbers who were disgruntled by the presence of the corsairs in Algiers revolted in 1524, driving Barbarossa out. He returned to Djerba, from where he could continue raiding Spanish and Italian shipping and also launch amphibious assaults to capture the remaining Spanish presidios scattered throughout the Maghreb. By that time, Barbarossa had 40 captains serving under him.

Barbarossa bided his time, waiting for an opportunity to return to Algiers. He made his move in May 1529 when he landed with troops and artillery and retook the city of Algiers. He intended, upon recapturing the city, to

*The swift-moving Ottoman galleasses and galliots swarmed the sail-driven Holy League ships at the Battle of Preveza when the wind dropped*



# NAVAL CLASH AT PREVEZA

OTTOMAN ADMIRAL HAYREDDIN BARBAROSSA OUTWITS HOLY LEAGUE ADMIRAL ANDREA DORIA IN A SHOWDOWN IN THE IONIAN SEA, SEPTEMBER 1538

**01** The Christian fleet assembles off the coast of Preveza on 2 September. The Spanish viceroy of Naples disembarks a portion of his 16,000 men from the roundships to launch an attack on 23 September against the Ottoman-held castle of Preveza. His objective is to capture the fortress, destroy the Ottoman shore batteries and bring Spanish guns to bear on Hayreddin Barbarossa's fleet inside the gulf. Supported by siege guns, the troops assail the fortress for three days.

**03** Ottoman Admiral Hayreddin Barbarossa brings his fleet to the mouth of the Gulf of Preveza. Both sides square off in line of battle, but for some inexplicable reason neither attacks. Barbarossa then retreats into the gulf, where the galleys are beached, with their bows facing outwards so that their guns can repulse an attack.

**04** Doria is unwilling to expose his galleys to destructive fire from a gauntlet of Ottoman guns by entering the narrow entrance of the Gulf of Preveza. The lateness of the year exposes the Christian fleet in the open sea to the threat of possible destruction from storms, which bear down from the northwest. He issues orders on the evening of 26 September for a withdrawal to begin the following morning.

**05** The wind drops on the morning of 27 September, and the Christian fleet becomes strung out as it moves south, with the galleys to the south and the roundships trailing far behind. Barbarossa's galleys emerge from the Gulf of Preveza and form a crescent. By mid-morning they are in position and advance in formation towards the Christian roundships.

**06** Captain Alessandro Bondulmier's Great Galleon of Venice is the first of the Christian ships to come under attack by the pursuing Ottoman galleys. Despite its slow speed, the great galleon is heavily built and well gunned. The galleon succeeds in disabling a number of Ottoman galleys.

**07** The lack of wind prevents the sail-driven Christian galleons from making a timely escape. The bow guns of Barbarossa's galleys pummel the roundships, inflicting substantial damage and sending some of the Spanish soldiers on board to the bottom of the sea.

**08** The captains of the Venetian galleys, who stand to lose the most from an Ottoman victory, turn back to engage the Ottoman galleys. Their crews fight like lions. The Ottomans sink two Holy League vessels and capture five, at the cost of three of their own vessels. At nightfall, the wind picks up and the Christian roundships make good their escape.

**SCATTERED CHRISTIAN GALLEYS ATTEMPTING TO REFORM**



**02** Ottoman infantry and cavalry stationed in Aetolia conduct a forced march to relieve the fort. The Ottoman counterattack on 25 September compels the Holy League admirals to reconsider their land attack. The Spanish viceroy wants to persist with the attack, but Admiral Andrea Doria holds a council of war and the viceroy is overruled.

**CASTLE OF PREVEZA**

**GULF OF PREVEZA**

**PROBABLE CHRISTIAN ANCHORAGE**

**GREEK MAINLAND**

**SANTA MAURA**

**DISTANCE IN MILES**  
0 1 2 3 4 5

MUSLIM MOVEMENTS	
CHRISTIAN MOVEMENTS	
MUSLIM BATTERIES	
PROBABLE MUSLIM ANCHORAGE	

destroy the Peñón of Algiers. The garrisons of the Spanish presidios along the Barbary Coast were despised by Berbers and Arabs alike, and therefore were unable to purchase supplies from the locals. When Barbarossa returned, the Spanish garrison was low on food, gunpowder and ammunition, and was awaiting resupply. The convoy of ships bearing supplies was long overdue.

Barbarossa moved quickly. As soon as his siege guns were in position, he began bombarding the presidio. After two weeks of sustained shelling, the heavy guns opened a breach wide enough for the Turks to charge through it. Governor Don Martin de Vargas promptly surrendered, having lost three-quarters of his men.

Khizr put the captured soldiers to work with other Christian slaves dismantling the fort, so that it would never again house Spanish troops. Under the bey of Algiers's watchful eye they used the stones to build a breakwater, stretching from the mainland to the islet, to protect his fleet from the powerful northern and westerly winds.

During this time, Khizr frequently plundered the coast of Spain for slaves and riches. He also evacuated Moriscos (Moors compelled to convert to Christianity) who wanted to escape intolerant Spain. He made sure to stay in the good graces of Sultan Suleiman by sending a portion of his booty to the Sublime Porte. Suleiman considered him an able administrator and superb naval commander. As a sign of respect, Suleiman bestowed on him the complementary Islamic honorific 'Hayreddin', meaning 'goodness of the faith'.

Hayreddin's capture of Algiers coincided with the Peace of Cambrai in 1529 between French King Francis I and Holy Roman Emperor Charles

V. The defeated Francis had to relinquish all claims to Italy. To make matters worse, Genoan Admiral Andrea Doria quit French service in order to command Charles's Spanish fleet.

### Sultan Suleiman's admiral

Suleiman summoned Hayreddin to Istanbul in 1532 to oversee the construction of a new imperial fleet. The sultan and admiral were in agreement that the Ottomans needed to capture Tunis and destroy Doria's Spanish fleet. While Hayreddin was in Istanbul, Doria had conducted a successful raid against an Ottoman squadron in September 1532, capturing the fortress of Coron on the southern tip of Morea (Peloponnese).

The following year Suleiman promoted the bey of Algiers to the exalted post of grand admiral. The shipbuilding initiative produced 70 galleys, each of which was outfitted with one bronze cannon in the bow. The mighty fleet departed from the Golden Horn in 1534. After raiding Calabria, it turned south for Tunis. The presidio at La Goulette (the gullet) guarded the channel leading to the harbour at Tunis. The troops disembarked on 16 August and quickly gained possession of Tunis. The ruling

Berber prince, Mulei Hassan, fled. After the fall of Tunis to Hayreddin, Hassan implored King Charles to help him recover the city. No sooner had Charles received the request than he began assembling forces for an operation he intended to lead himself. The emperor's 500-ship armada weighed anchor near Tunis on 13 June 1535.

Hayreddin knew that he could not hold Tunis, but he put up a spirited defence anyway. Charles landed his troops a short distance from La Goulette. It took the Spanish army 24 days of constant fighting to capture the twin towers at La Goulette. To his credit, Hayreddin safely withdrew his surviving troops. However, Charles succeeded in destroying 82 Ottoman vessels.

### War with Venice

Charles's decisive victory at Tunis did little to calm the feeling of insecurity and dread that gripped those living along the coast in Spain, Italy and the Christian-held islands of the western Mediterranean. They lived in constant fear of attack by Hayreddin's fleet and Ottoman corsairs.

King Francis encouraged Suleiman to send vessels to assist him in his operations against Charles. Although the French had a fleet, it had recently been defeated by Doria. Suleiman duly obliged him, as he harboured dreams of capturing Rome one day. They hashed out a plan whereby Francis would attack into northern Italy and the Turks would land in Apulia and push north. An Ottoman squadron arrived in Marseilles in 1536, but Francis soon grew skittish about conducting joint operations with the Turks against fellow Christians. This diminished the French king significantly in the eyes of the Ottomans.

**“AS A SIGN OF RESPECT, SULEIMAN BESTOWED ON HIM THE COMPLEMENTARY ISLAMIC HONORIFIC ‘HAYREDDIN’, MEANING ‘GOODNESS OF THE FAITH’”**

## UNHOLY ALLIANCE

BARBAROSSA RELUCTANTLY CO-OPERATED WITH THE FRENCH IN AN ATTACK AGAINST NICE DURING THE SHORTLIVED FRANCO-OTTOMAN ALLIANCE

More than 110 Ottoman galleys carrying 30,000 troops led by Grand Admiral Hayreddin Pasha sailed into the French port of Marseilles on 21 July 1543 for the purpose of conducting a joint operation against their mutual enemy, Holy Roman Emperor Charles V.

To his disgust, the Ottoman admiral found the French unwilling to embark on an attack directly against Charles's dominions in Italy as previously discussed. Instead, the French had decided to attack Nice, which belonged to Duke Charles of Savoy, one of Charles's allies. The Ottoman admiral was furious as he believed the French were squandering a great opportunity by attacking such a minor objective.

The attack began a month later. Turkish batteries blasted a breach in the outer walls of the town through which French troops poured. But the combined army failed to capture the citadel. When Francois de Bourbon, Count of Enghien, learned that a relief army was on its way, he ordered a withdrawal. The French troops sacked the lower town, yet the Ottomans were blamed for it.

*Grand Admiral Hayreddin Pasha led an armada of 110 ships to Marseilles, only to learn that the French wanted to avoid attacking Habsburg lands*





**“HAYREDDIN’S FLEET CARRIED 6,000 CHRISTIAN CAPTIVES BACK TO ISTANBUL. IT WAS TO BE HIS LAST GREAT RAID, AS TWO YEARS LATER HE DIED OF A FEVER IN HIS SEASIDE PALACE IN ISTANBUL”**



*Ottoman corsairs in oar-driven warships known as galliots attack a powerful Spanish galleon along the Barbary Coast*

Suleiman unleashed Hayreddin to wreak havoc against Charles’s Italian domains. The Ottoman admiral, who the Christians called the “King of Evil,” proceeded to ravage Apulia. Hayreddin sailed from Istanbul in May 1537 with 170 galleys and support ships bound for Apulia. Over the course of a month he torched towns, destroyed forts and carried off thousands of Christians to be sold as slaves.

In 1537 the Venetians and Ottomans went to war with each other for the third time. Suleiman ordered Hayreddin to capture the Venetian citadel at Corfu, which if captured could serve as a forward base for an invasion of Italy. But the Venetians had made significant improvements to the citadel, and Hayreddin judged it impervious to his siege artillery. He therefore concentrated on mopping up Venetian outposts in the region. He attacked 25 strongholds on the Aegean islands and Morea (Peloponnese). Of the 25 outposts, he destroyed 13 and compelled the other 12 to pay annual tribute to the sultan.

While Ottomans were preoccupied with Venice, Emperor Charles sent envoys to Hayreddin with an invitation to abandon Ottoman service in favour of becoming a Habsburg admiral. Hayreddin strung him along, all the time keeping Suleiman apprised of the negotiations. As a devout Muslim, Hayreddin had no intention of leaving Ottoman service.

### **Invincible admiral**

Sultan Suleiman launched an offensive that same year, designed to secure the Ionian Sea and the Strait of Otranto for future operations against Italy. To counter the threat, Pope Paul III established the Holy League in February 1538. The pope placed Genoan Admiral Andrea Doria in charge of the vast Christian armada that included fleets from Genoa, Venice, Naples, Malta and the Papacy. Doria’s 130 galleys and 50 galleons met Hayreddin’s 50 galliots and 90 galleys in battle near the entrance to the Gulf of Preveza on 28 September 1538. Because of the impregnable position of Grand Admiral Hayreddin Barbarossa’s galley fleet, Doria attempted to withdraw without fighting; however, the Ottoman galleys caught his sail-driven galleons when the wind dropped. The Ottomans inflicted greater losses on the Christian fleet than they received from it.

In the aftermath of the Ottoman victory at Preveza, a fierce storm drove Hayreddin’s imperial fleet up the Adriatic coastline, destroying half of his vessels. Afterwards, he returned to Istanbul to build more galleys.

Hayreddin’s next noteworthy expedition came in 1543 when he led a large galley fleet to Marseilles to participate in joint operations with the French. An amphibious attack on Nice failed when Franco-Ottoman troops couldn’t capture the port-city’s strong citadel.

After supporting the French in their failed attack on Nice in summer 1543, King Francis billeted the Ottoman fleet in Toulon. When they could not agree on an objective in spring 1544, Hayreddin led his fleet out of French waters. Determined to come home to a hero’s welcome, Hayreddin spent summer 1544 using his fleet and troops to methodically pillage Campagna, Calabria and Sicily. Although the inhabitants of southern Italy had built watchtowers along hundreds of kilometres of coastline, they did little good as there were no local forces sizable or powerful enough to check the Ottoman raiders. Hayreddin’s last raid was marked by sadism and cruelty designed to undermine the faith of Christians in their God. In some cases, entire villages were wiped off the map.

Hayreddin’s fleet carried 6,000 Christian captives back to Istanbul. It was to be his last great raid, as two years later he died of a fever in his seaside palace in Istanbul.

Barbarossa’s life was remarkable, if brutal, given that he rose from modest beginnings to one of the highest posts in the Ottoman Empire. He showed during the height of his career that he understood the advantages and limitations of galley warfare. He was revered for his military achievements across the Muslim world and despised for his cruelty throughout the Christian one. He remains a celebrated figure in the Turkish psyche.

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Great Battles

# CRÉCY

English and Welsh longbowmen changed the nature of European warfare when they helped Edward III win a decisive victory at the beginning of the Hundred Years' War

WORDS TOM GARNER

CRÉCY-EN-PONTHIEU, PICARDY, FRANCE 26 AUGUST 1346

**I**t is a summer's day in northern France, and on a Picardy hillside tens of thousands of soldiers have assembled to engage in a battle of two kings. One is defending his kingdom while the other has come to claim it. Two other monarchs are also present, but common soldiers dominate this noticeably regal battle.

Genoese crossbowmen are ordered by the French king, Philip VI, to attack the positions of his English rival, Edward III. As they advance a thunderstorm breaks out, and when it clears deadly arrows replace the raindrops. These shots are so rapid that the chronicler Jean Froissart reported, "it seemed as if it snowed". The sun then shines into the crossbowmen's eyes so that they are now blind as well as beleaguered. The Genoese flee from this hellish eruption. The bloody encounter begins a battle that will transform European battlefields.

This momentous engagement became known as the Battle of Crécy, and it was the first of three major English victories during the Hundred Years' War – the other two being the Battles of Poitiers and Agincourt. Although Agincourt became the most famous of the three, and Poitiers involved the capture of a French king, it is Crécy that is arguably the most important.

It confirmed the military reputation of Edward III, established the fighting career of his heir, Edward 'the Black Prince', and heralded the rise of the longbow and infantrymen in medieval warfare. Crécy also signalled the decline of knightly chivalry on the battlefield, despite the fact that Edward III established the Order of the Garter two years later. In fact, Edward's chivalric ostentations were only skin-deep, and Crécy was a manifestation of the English king's pragmatically ruthless strategies and his burning ambition to rule not just one kingdom, but two.

## "Excesses, rebellions and disobedient acts"

Although the Hundred Years' War (1337-1453) was a series of intermittent conflicts conducted over a very prolonged period, its root cause remained the same. The war was primarily

*Left: The Battle of Crécy as depicted in a 15th-century illuminated manuscript of Jean Froissart's Chronicles. Longbowmen (right) are clearly shown fighting slow-loading Genoese crossbowmen*

conducted between the Plantagenet and Valois dynasties over the right to rule the kingdom of France, and it was Edward III who vigorously sparked the momentous conflict.

In the early 14th century, the English and French monarchies were deeply intertwined. The English had held lands in France since the Norman Conquest as fiefs to the French monarch. At one point Henry II's Angevin Empire covered England and half of modern France, but by Edward III's accession in 1327 only Aquitaine (which was variously known as Gascony or Guyenne) remained in English hands.

Nevertheless, his familial tie to the French monarchy strengthened Edward's ambitions in France. His mother Isabella was the sister of Charles IV, and as his nephew, Edward believed he had a strong claim to the French throne. His claim was declared in 1328 when Charles died without a direct male heir, and Isabella claimed the throne on behalf of her son. Edward was on the cusp of becoming the ruler of a dual-monarchy, which would have made him the most powerful king in Europe. The French thought differently.

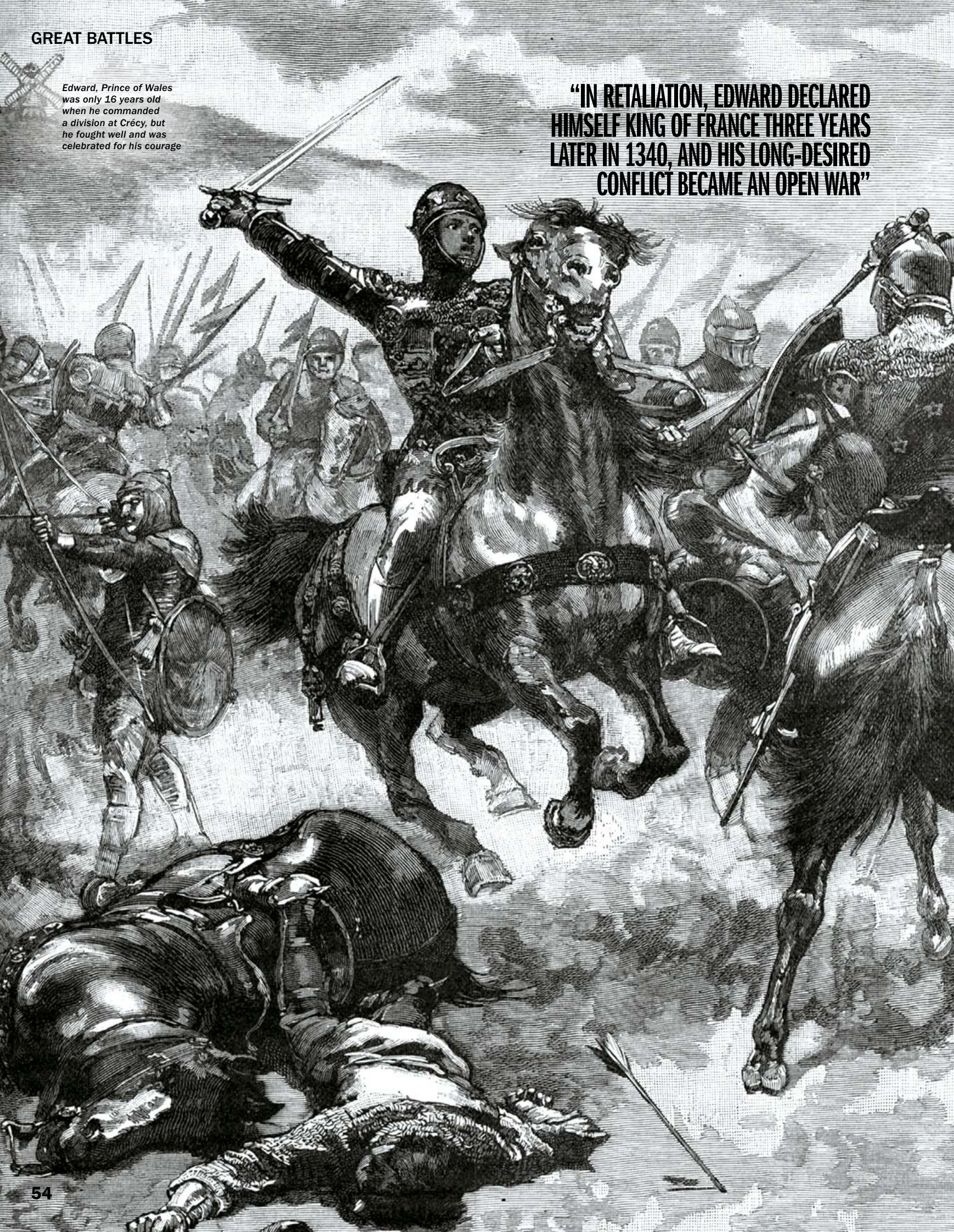
Edward's claim was declared invalid by the French, who declared that ancient 'Salic Law' prevented women from claiming the throne for themselves or their children. Despite the fact

*Below: Although Philip VI is arguably best remembered for his defeat at Crécy, he had previously been a successful battlefield commander, particularly at the Battle of Cassel in 1328*



*Edward, Prince of Wales was only 16 years old when he commanded a division at Crécy, but he fought well and was celebrated for his courage*

**"IN RETALIATION, EDWARD DECLARED HIMSELF KING OF FRANCE THREE YEARS LATER IN 1340, AND HIS LONG-DESIRED CONFLICT BECAME AN OPEN WAR"**



that Edward was Charles's closest surviving male relative, the French chose Philip of Valois as their new king. Philip was a first cousin of Charles and he was duly crowned as Philip VI.

Edward did not seriously contest Philip's accession at first and even paid personal homage for his French lands in 1329, but tensions grew over the following decade. Edward was often counselled to "defy the French king who kept his heritage from him wrongfully," and he was willing to oblige. He goaded the French by creating trade problems in Flanders, and in 1337 Philip confiscated Aquitaine from Edward. His reason for the forfeit was because of the "many excesses, rebellions and disobedient acts committed by the King of England against Us and Our Royal Majesty."

In retaliation, Edward declared himself king of France three years later in 1340, and his long-desired conflict became an open war. The English won a crushing naval victory at Sluys in June 1340 and went on to conduct a destructive raiding invasion in northern France and the Low Countries. Nevertheless, it wasn't until 1346 that Edward raised enough funds to launch a proper campaign in France and met his nemesis Philip in battle.

### The Normandy chevauchée

On 13 July 1346, Edward landed at Saint-Vaast-la-Hougue on the Cherbourg Peninsula in hundreds of ships that contained around 15,000 men. At the time this was one of the largest expeditionary forces in English history, and Edward's army proceeded to wreak deliberately destructive havoc in Normandy. Known as a 'chevauchée', the violence was a policy of burning and pillaging in order to intimidate the local population and reduce the productivity of the region. For Edward, this form of war was designed to strike at Philip through his subjects, and the results were devastating.

Many Norman towns, including Barfleur and Cherbourg, were burnt, along with the surrounding countryside, but it was Caen that suffered the most. When the garrison surrendered the English soldiers "were without mercy" and began to loot, rape and kill the inhabitants. One chronicler reported that there

were "many evil deeds, murders and robberies in the town," and Edward personally profited from vast amounts of plunder, including gold, silver and hundreds of ransomed prisoners.

After torching Normandy, Edward moved on to wreak destruction in the direction of Paris, although territorial conquests were not actually his aim. He reckoned that Philip would be brought to the negotiating table by economic damage or that he would be so angry that he would seek Edward out in battle. The English king was spoiling for a fight and wanted Philip to divert his attention away from Aquitaine. Edward got his wish, and Philip assembled as many troops as possible while sending reinforcements to Rouen.

Despite his advance on the French capital, Edward never intended to besiege Paris because he lacked an adequate siege train. The English were also heavily outnumbered by Philip's army, which was assembling at Saint-Denis. The French intended to trap Edward's force by blocking bridges on the River Seine, but the English repaired a bridge at Poissy and retreated northwards, burning everything along the way.

### Battle of Blanchetaque

Edward's path was blocked again at the River Somme, and Philip was now in hot pursuit. Fortunately for the English, a passable ford was found at Blanchetaque near Abbeville.

**"THE FRENCH INTENDED TO TRAP EDWARD'S FORCE BY BLOCKING BRIDGES ON THE RIVER SEINE, BUT THE ENGLISH REPAIRED A BRIDGE AT POISSY AND RETREATED NORTHWARDS, BURNING EVERYTHING ALONG THE WAY"**

Nevertheless, a large force of French soldiers and Genoese crossbowmen in French service defended the opposite bank. English archers forced their way across in a "sore battle" on 24 August, but Philip simultaneously attacked Edward from the rear and even captured some of his baggage train. The Somme's waters then rose and the French were prevented from crossing in pursuit.

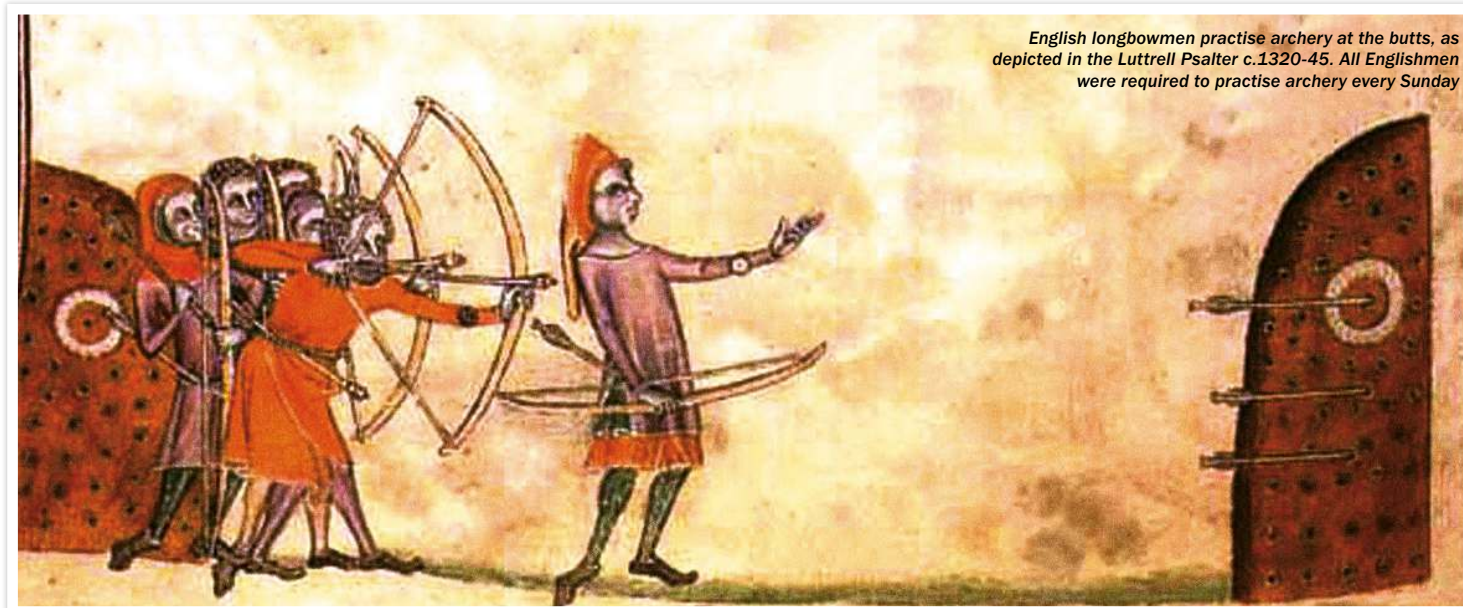
The fighting at Blanchetaque is a historical footnote compared to the battle at Crécy two days later, but if the English had failed to cross the ford, then subsequent events would have turned out differently. By this time Edward's men were exhausted from marching, and their food supplies were very low. Blanchetaque was also the last river crossing before the sea, and if the English had been trapped they ran a very high chance of being destroyed by Philip.

As it was, the successful crossing meant that Edward could now choose his ground for the inevitable battle and had a route to safety. If the battle went wrong then his army would retreat to Flanders, a friendly territory with strong connections to the English wool trade.

Edward soon found a perfect position on rising ground near the small town of Crécy-en-Ponthieu. The English positioned themselves on a hill that was crowned by a distinctive windmill. Below them was an open space known as the 'Valley of the Clerks'. Edward's army was protected on all flanks: to his centre and right flank was the small River Maie, while large woods surrounded his force at a safe distance.

Edward established his command post and deployed his men in order of battle. His 16-year-old son and heir Edward, Prince of Wales, commanded his right flank and centre. The prince was inexperienced so he was to be supported by able veterans such as Sir John Chandos and Geoffrey d'Harcourt. The earls of Northampton and Arundel commanded the king's left flank, while Edward himself commanded a reserve division from the windmill. The mill offered commanding views over the battlefield, and the king could easily direct operations from there.

Once these divisions were deployed the chronicler Jean le Bel recorded that Edward



*English longbowmen practise archery at the butts, as depicted in the Luttrell Psalter c.1320-45. All Englishmen were required to practise archery every Sunday*

*English route from Blanchelaque Ford*

Park

Windmill

**01 DEPLOYMENT AT THE WINDMILL**

Edward III assembles his men on a hillside near Cr cy-en-Ponthieu and divides them into three divisions. The Black Prince and the earl of Northampton command the English right and left flanks, while the king commands a reserve division at the hilltop windmill. A front line of archers connects Northampton's and the prince's divisions.

**06 THE BLACK PRINCE WINS HIS SPURS**

Despite the heavy volleys, continual French cavalry charges finally reach the English lines. The division of Edward, Prince of Wales is hit particularly hard, but the king's heir shows great courage and the French are ultimately driven back.

**07 LAST CHARGE OF JOHN OF BOHEMIA**

Although he is blind, King John orders the horses of his retinue to be tied with his so that he can personally fight the English. The Bohemians attack the Black Prince's division, but although they fight with great courage the majority are killed, including John.

**03 THE GENOESE ADVANCE**

The French are so keen to fight that their large numbers create disorder. Philip orders Genoese crossbowmen to begin the battle by advancing with shooting distance of the English lines. A thunderstorm breaks out and hinders their progress, while Edward's archers protect their bowstrings from the rain.

**04 LONGBOWMEN FIRE DEADLY VOLLEYS**

The rain stops and the evening sun shines into the eyes of the Genoese. The English use this to their advantage by loosing murderous volleys of arrows at the crossbowmen. Their accuracy creates panic and the Genoese retreat. The crossbowmen are then cut down by furious French knights, who launch a disorganised charge against the English.

**05 ARROWS, CONFUSION AND CANNON FIRE**

The clash of the Genoese with their French allies provides the English with an opportunity to continually rain down arrows on what is increasingly becoming a bloody field. The English even fire primitive cannons at the French, although their impact is insignificant.

Crecy Church

Great Battles  
**CR CY**  
26 AUGUST 1346

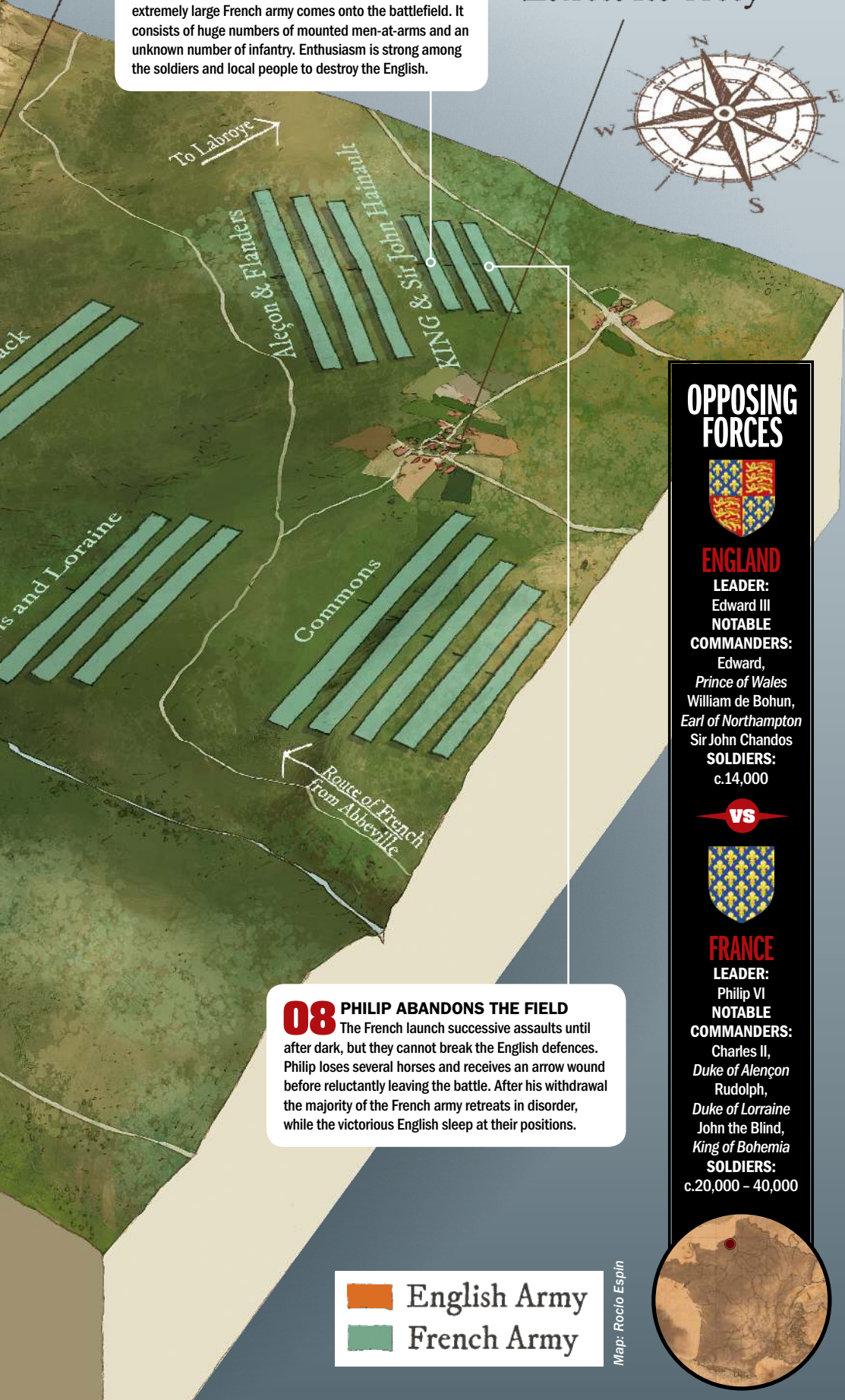
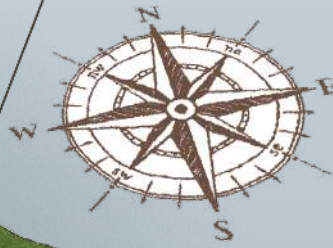


Vallée des Clercs

**02 PHILIP VI ARRIVES**

While the English rest in position, Philip VI's extremely large French army comes onto the battlefield. It consists of huge numbers of mounted men-at-arms and an unknown number of infantry. Enthusiasm is strong among the soldiers and local people to destroy the English.

Estrées les Crecy



**08 PHILIP ABANDONS THE FIELD**

The French launch successive assaults until after dark, but they cannot break the English defences. Philip loses several horses and receives an arrow wound before reluctantly leaving the battle. After his withdrawal the majority of the French army retreats in disorder, while the victorious English sleep at their positions.

**OPPOSING FORCES**



**ENGLAND**

**LEADER:**

Edward III

**NOTABLE**

**COMMANDERS:**

Edward,

Prince of Wales

William de Bohun,

Earl of Northampton

Sir John Chandos

**SOLDIERS:**

c.14,000

**VS**



**FRANCE**

**LEADER:**

Philip VI

**NOTABLE**

**COMMANDERS:**

Charles II,

Duke of Alençon

Rudolph,

Duke of Lorraine

John the Blind,

King of Bohemia

**SOLDIERS:**

c.20,000 - 40,000

 English Army

 French Army

Map: Rocío Espin



"went among his men, exhorting each of them with a laugh to do their duty, and flattered and encouraged them to such an extent that cowards became brave men". At this point every man bedded down on the earth to rest before the enemy came.

**Longbowmen, 'kern' and cannons**

These soldiers, whose courage Edward appealed to, were not part of an ordinary medieval army – their composition and equipment were revolutionary in continental Europe. Edward's slightly reduced force at Crécy consisted of approximately 2,000 men-at-arms, 500 lancers, 1,500 spearmen and 7,000 archers. In an age when cavalry was prized and central to battles, the predominance of foot soldiers was astonishing in itself, particularly for a man like Edward who was obsessed with knightly culture.

The English men-at-arms, who were mounted armoured knights and esquires, were actually the least important part of Edward's army. These men were still mostly armoured in chain mail, which was in contrast to the French, who were better protected with newer plate armour.

Nor should it be assumed that Edward's army was exclusively English. Large numbers of his men were Welsh, Cornish and Irish spearmen who were armed with dirks and javelins.

These men were known as the 'kern' and were recorded as "certain rascals that went on foot with great knives". Their talent was for bringing down horses, but their importance was small compared to the English and Welsh archers.

Edward's archers formed the bulk of his army and carried the famous longbow. This unique bow revolutionised military tactics and was largely unknown outside of the British Isles in 1346. Longbows could measure between 1.7-1.9 metres (five feet seven inches-six feet three inches) in length and despite becoming an English military icon they were actually Welsh in origin. Edward I had been impressed by its shooting ability during his conquest of Wales in the late 13th century, and from his reign all English villages practised archery every Sunday.

Longbows were standardised by 1346, and each longbowman trained from an early age to loose 10-12 arrows per minute. This required great strength, as the bow required a draw-weight of 36-45 kilograms (80-100 pounds), but the result was the equivalent of a medieval machine gun. The sky was known to darken under a heavy barrage from longbows, and each arrow had a fighting range of 135 metres (150 yards) and could pierce plate armour at 55 metres (60 yards). Each archer carried around 24 arrows as well as secondary weapons such as swords, axes, billhooks or mallets. The longbowman may have come from peasant stock but he was extremely formidable.

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**"THESE MEN WERE KNOWN AS THE 'KERN' AND WERE RECORDED AS 'CERTAIN RASCALS THAT WENT ON FOOT WITH GREAT KNIVES'"**

Edward III certainly knew his archers' worth. Longbowmen had played a critical role in his grandfather Edward I's victory against Sir William Wallace at the Battle of Falkirk in 1298. Edward had also directly experienced the longbow's power in his decisive victory against the Scots at the Battle of Halidon Hill and at sea at the Battle of Sluys. The French were the longbow's victim at Sluys but they remarkably failed to take notice of Edward's archers due to their belief that mounted knights were superior soldiers.

Longbows were not the only missile weapons in Edward's arsenal. The English are reputed to have had guns on the Crécy campaign, which were primitive tubes mounted on a cart. Artillery had never been used on a European battlefield before, but their effectiveness would have been more psychological than practical. Their lethality was questionable, but they would have produced flames, smoke and, above all, previously unheard noise.

### A "very murderous and cruel" battle

Despite the formidable equipment of the English army, their opponents were not to be underestimated. It was the English who were retreating in a poor condition, and Philip's confidence was arguably not misplaced when he arrived on Saturday 26 August 1346. Estimates vary wildly as to the exact size of his army, but it was a huge host that numbered between 20,000-40,000 men. This included men-at-arms who almost outnumbered the English on their own, as well as large numbers of Genoese crossbowmen.

As well as the Genoese, Philip was accompanied by nobles from across Europe, including the blind King John of Bohemia, James III of Majorca and the future Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV and Charles I of Monaco. Philip was a distinguished soldier who had won a

## "FRENCH MEN-AT-ARMS BEGAN A DISORGANISED CHARGE AND TRAMPLED OVER THE CROSSBOWMEN, WHILE THE ENGLISH CONTINUED TO LOOSE VOLLEY AFTER VOLLEY"

great victory at the Battle of Cassel in 1328. His army at Crécy was the "Flower of France", and for the French the only outcome could be glory.

Nevertheless, the French army was so large that it was impossible to control. Many men at the front tried to halt in order before the English, but impatient men-at-arms pushed them forward from behind. The roads between Abbeville and Crécy were also jammed by local peasants and townsmen, who were encouraging Philip's force to kill the English. Philip ordered the Genoese to make the first attack through the disorder, and a line of crossbowmen advanced to within 135-180 metres (150-200 yards) of the English.

Under the circumstances, the Genoese were not the best troops to make the first attack. They had marched for kilometres carrying their heavy crossbows, and their slow loading time meant that they were vulnerable against the faster longbow arrows. Bad luck also dealt them a blow when a short, sharp thunderstorm drenched them as they advanced. By contrast, the English shrewdly dismantled their bowstrings and covered them under their hats to keep them dry during the downpour. When the rain cleared they quickly restrung their bows, just as the evening sun began to shine in the eyes of the unfortunate Genoese.

It was perfect timing for the English, who gave a great shout, stepped forward and rained arrows down on the crossbowmen. The Genoese quickly dropped their crossbows and retreated. Charles, Count of Alençon was so enraged by the Genoese's retreat that he cried, "Ride down this rabble who block our advance!" French men-at-arms began a disorganised charge and trampled over the crossbowmen, while the English continued to loose volley after volley.

In the rear of the French army, the cries of the Genoese were mistaken for the English being killed, and so they also pressed forward. This created a confused mob that was being decimated by accurate longbow marksmanship. Jean le Bel, who spoke to eyewitnesses, said, "A great outcry rose to the stars," and horses began to pile on top of the other "like a litter of piglets". The French cavalry were "sumptuously equipped" but it made no difference against the archers. It was at this point that Edward's guns were used, and they reportedly terrified the already traumatised horses.

Despite the carnage, some of the French, including Alençon, managed to reach the English lines through doggedness and sheer weight of numbers. They hit the Prince of Wales's division particularly hard and the king's heir was knocked off his feet. His standard-bearer Richard de Beaumont successfully defended the prince until he could stand, and appeals were sent to the king for reinforcements. Froissart recorded that when Edward heard that his son had not been killed he said, "As long as my son has life let the boy win his spurs; for I am determined that all the glory and honour of this day shall be given to him."

This example of martial chivalry is a good story, but another chronicler recorded that Edward did send reinforcements to the prince,

A romanticised depiction of Edward III fighting at the Battle of Blanchetaque. This engagement enabled the English to cross the River Somme before the Battle of Crécy



but the prince and his men were found resting on their swords, surrounded by corpses, as they waited for the next attack. Whatever the truth, Crécy was the foundation of the Black Prince's reputation.

Alençon was killed in the fighting, and soon another noble, the blind King John of Bohemia also lost his life. John was informed how the battle was proceeding, and when he heard his son was fighting he said to his attendants, "As I am blind, I request of you to lead me so far into the engagement that I may strike one stroke with my sword." The Bohemian retinue's horses were tied together with an insistent John at the head. The king rode into the English and "made good use of his sword; for he and his companions fought most gallantly". The Bohemians rode until they were killed and their bodies, including John's, were found tied together the next morning. Only two of his retinue lived to tell the tale, and Prince Edward was so moved that he reputedly adopted John's crest and motto 'Ich Dien' ('I Serve') as his own. It is still the official heraldic badge of the Prince of Wales.

The French army charged against the English 15 times during the battle, and each charge was cut down in disorder by the longbowmen. The fighting became "very murderous and cruel" with the English giving no quarter and refusing ransoms. The Irish and Cornish kern in particular "slew many as they lay on the ground,

both earls, knights, barons and squires." The attacks continued until nightfall, when Philip (who had been wounded in the neck by an arrow and unhorsed at least once) led a futile charge of 60 men-at-arms. He was saved from death when the count of Hainault persuaded him to leave and win another day. Philip rode to the nearest chateau with only five attendants and famously shouted outside the gate, "Open your gate quickly, for this is the fortune of France!" After briefly resting, the king then rode on at night to safety at Amiens, but his defeat was calamitous.

### Onwards to Calais

The battle did not finally end until nightfall, and the English remained in their positions and slept on the ground. Even when dawn broke there was a thick fog that initially obscured the battlefield. After the earl of Northampton fought off a final French force of militia and Norman knights, Edward was finally able to observe the scale of his victory and ordered the dead to be counted.

The result was shocking. As well as John of Bohemia, the French had lost many of their senior nobles – the duke of Lorraine, Alençon and around ten other counts, including those of Flanders, Blois and Auxerre. Over 1,000 lords and knights were killed and at least 10,000 'common' soldiers died, although the true figure will never be known. While the French dead were counted, the kern went across the

battlefield and gruesomely murdered the enemy wounded and pillaged them, only sparing the ones that were deemed worthy of ransom. By contrast, Edward reputedly lost only around 100 men, although chroniclers may have downplayed his losses.

What is not in doubt is that Crécy was one of the most crushing victories of the 14th century. English soldiers had previously been poorly regarded in Europe, but the battle was an unexpected triumph of 'firepower' over armour, and as such it was something of a military revolution. Although Edward was in no position to take Paris afterwards, he proceeded to attack Calais in a siege that lasted from September 1346-August 1347. Throughout this time Philip was reluctant to relieve the siege because he feared a repeat of Crécy. Once the port had fallen it became a key English base for the rest of the Hundred Years' War, and was held by the English until 1558.

Despite many more victories and territorial gains, Edward III never succeeded in becoming king of France, but Crécy still left a terrible legacy. Bloody though it was, the battle and subsequent capture of Calais was the true beginning of England's brutally confident and often successful campaigns in France. It ensured that the English would only continue to press their royal claims even harder, and the result was a conflict that cost countless dead and lasted for 116 years.

*Inset: The origin of the heraldic badge of the Prince of Wales is often attributed to the Black Prince at Crécy. Some claim it was adopted to commemorate John of Bohemia's bravery, while others assert it was a tribute to the prince's Welsh archers*

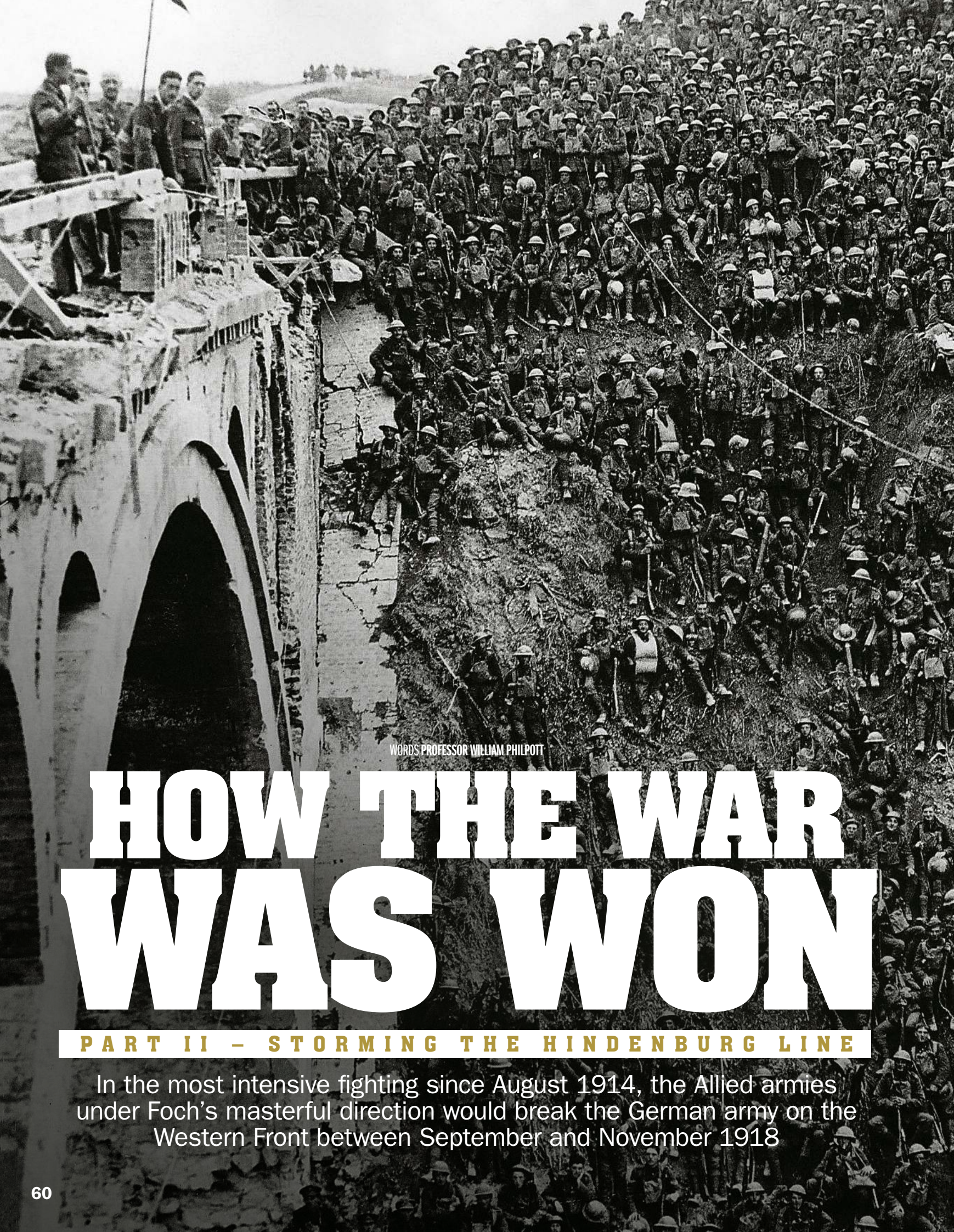
*Below: The death of King John of Bohemia at Crécy. The blind monarch's courage was one of the most famous tragedies of the battle*

**"ENGLISH SOLDIERS HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN POORLY REGARDED IN EUROPE, BUT THE BATTLE WAS AN UNEXPECTED TRIUMPH OF 'FIREPOWER' OVER ARMOUR, AND AS SUCH IT WAS SOMETHING OF A MILITARY REVOLUTION"**



*Edward III counts the dead on the battlefield of Crécy. The aftermath of the battle was a grisly affair, where Irish and Cornish spearmen murdered the wounded and looted their possessions*





WORDS PROFESSOR WILLIAM PHILPOTT

# HOW THE WAR WAS WON

## PART II - STORMING THE HINDENBURG LINE

In the most intensive fighting since August 1914, the Allied armies under Foch's masterful direction would break the German army on the Western Front between September and November 1918

“**E**veryone into the Battle!” Allied generalissimo Ferdinand Foch was accustomed to declare when questioned on his method. From the end of September until the armistice on 11 November the whole Western Front, from the Channel coast to Verdun, would be aflame as the German army that had occupied and ravaged France for the previous four years was destroyed once and for all.

This final offensive had three stages. First, the fixed defences of the Hindenburg Line had to be overcome. Foch would do this with a sequenced series of offensives all along the front that culminated with his central armies storming the Hindenburg Line between Cambrai and Saint-Quentin. Second, the Germans had to be driven from their supporting line of defences, the so-called Hermann-Hunding Line. Third, the Allied armies had to sustain their pursuit of the retreating enemy as armistice terms were being negotiated.

Surveying the improving Allied military position in late August, Foch had to decide whether there was a realistic prospect of defeating the German army and ending the war before winter. His summer counterattack had seized the initiative and inflicted significant damage on the enemy – materially, morally and through large numbers of casualties and prisoners. But so far it had only restored the positions held at the start of the year, and the Germans still possessed defensive reserves.

Plans were in hand for crushing the Germans in 1919, with vast numbers of American soldiers backed by masses of war material. But for Foch, a breathing space for the enemy and a return to positional warfare was unthinkable. It was his intention that the battle should continue until one side broke, and on the balance of evidence, it would be Germany and its allies: an intensification of pressure would work better and more quickly than a delay until Allied strength was overwhelming.

Momentum and morale were sufficient to carry on, although as the final stage of the campaign developed Foch had to monitor his own forces carefully. Manpower and munitions shortages, resulting from the intensity of operations, were impacting the fighting effectiveness of all his armies in the final months of the war, and logistical problems caused by the relatively rapid pace of advance had to be surmounted. On 30 August, he delivered his second set of instructions to the Allied army commanders, outlining a “general battle of the Allied Armies... with the maximum of Allied forces, in the shortest possible time,” that would spread the pressure on the Germans from the centre of the Western Front out to the wings. It was a judgement with which his subordinates concurred. “It seems to me the beginning of the end,” British Commander-in-Chief Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig noted in his diary on 8 September: “If we act with energy now, a decision can be obtained in the very near future.” Everyone understood that to reach that end, much hard fighting still lay ahead.

*Left: Men of the 46th Division pose for a group photograph after their successful assault crossing the St. Quentin Canal*

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### Cracking the German army

Foch had always appreciated that breaking the enemy would require engaging German forces all along the Western Front. Now that the moment had arrived, all Allied armies had to be won over. General John Pershing, commanding the American Expeditionary Forces, concurred after some remonstrance, since Foch's plan would deny his newly formed armies any real independence of action.

Finally the hitherto passive Belgian army, commanded by its independently minded king, Albert I, had to be induced to enter the fight. Foch and Albert had fought together in 1914, when Foch had organised French forces to support the retreating Belgian army, and Albert trusted his military judgement. With victory at hand, Albert's army would play its long-anticipated role in liberating Belgium. To mount the final offensive in Flanders that would win back his country, launched on 28 September, Albert was given command of an Allied army group with an experienced French army commander, Jean-Marie Degoutte, as his chief of staff. Albert commanded his own army, General Sir Herbert Plumer's Second British Army, and a French army corps (later increased to a whole army).

Foch's grand offensive commenced on 26 September with an attack in the Meuse-

Argonne sector, west of Verdun, by Pershing's First American Army and the French Fourth Army, commanded by General Henri Gouraud (who had earned the nickname 'Lion of the Argonne' when commanding an army corps in the region in 1915).

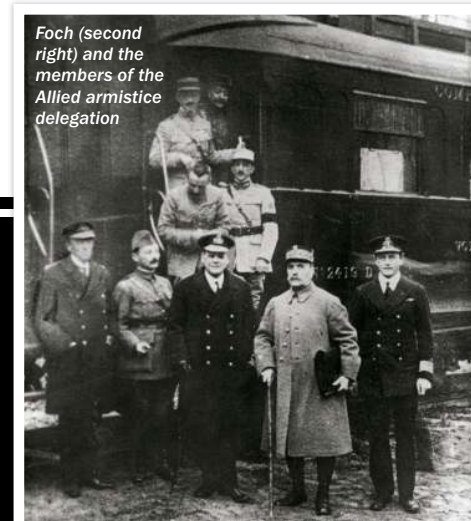
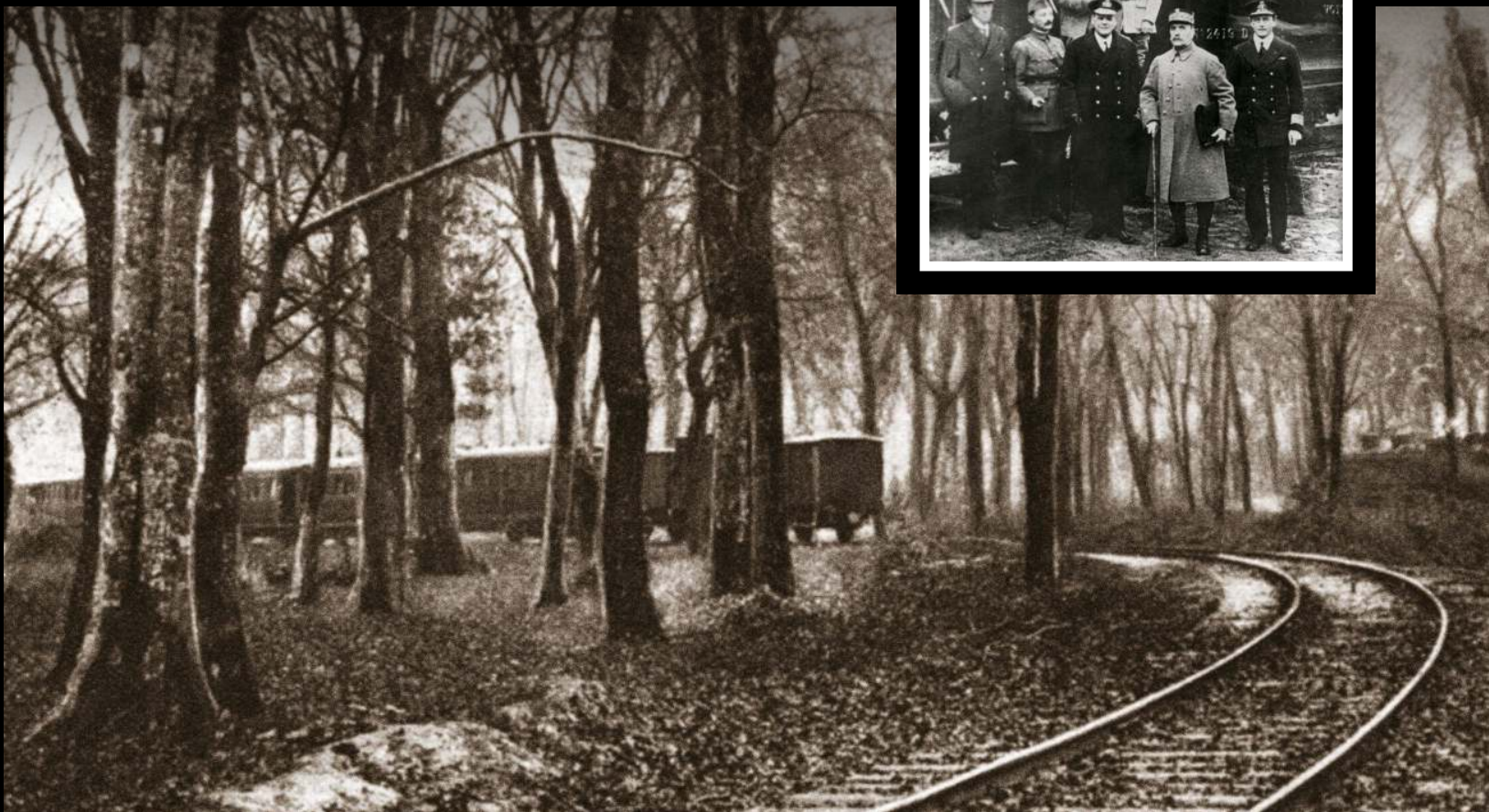
The first phase of the Meuse-Argonne offensive was confused: the French attacked with method and care and made steady progress, while the Americans attacked en masse and with vigour but poor command and control. Although Pershing complained to Foch that the slow French advance was delaying his own operations, Gouraud knew better than to get ahead of the pace and risk being taken in the flank. He knew that the Americans' logistics were in chaos and that their attack would break down: by 29 September the US First Army had taken heavy casualties and Pershing had lost control of his units. Much was made post-war of the legend of the 'lost battalion' – actually intermingled elements of several battalions from 77th US Division – that had gotten hopelessly mixed up and advanced beyond supporting units when the offensive was renewed on 2 October, only to be cut off for five days and whittled down by counterattacks. Many lives were lost trying to relieve the trapped soldiers. By 1918 the French would never allow such an error to occur.

This error also suggested that there was considerable fight left in the German defence. Reinforcements had been sent to stop a breakthrough towards the important railway junction at Mezières, and by mid-October the offensive was halted. Still, the attack achieved its objective of drawing German attention from the rest of the front.

On 27 September Haig's two central armies, Third Army (General Sir Julian Byng) and First Army (General Sir Henry Horne) renewed their offensive towards Cambrai. As was customary in the first phase of an assault, they made good early progress. The methods employed were now second-nature to the veteran troops and their experienced commanders. On this occasion a heavy overnight bombardment preceded a dawn assault. Although – as was almost always the case – in places the attack was held up by unsilenced German machine guns, advances of up to 6.5 kilometres (four miles) were made where the defences had been suppressed. Progress inevitably slowed over the following days, although by 29 September troops of Third Army were over the Scheldt Canal. These attacks would draw more German reserves southwards before the Anglo-Belgian forces struck the next day in Flanders.

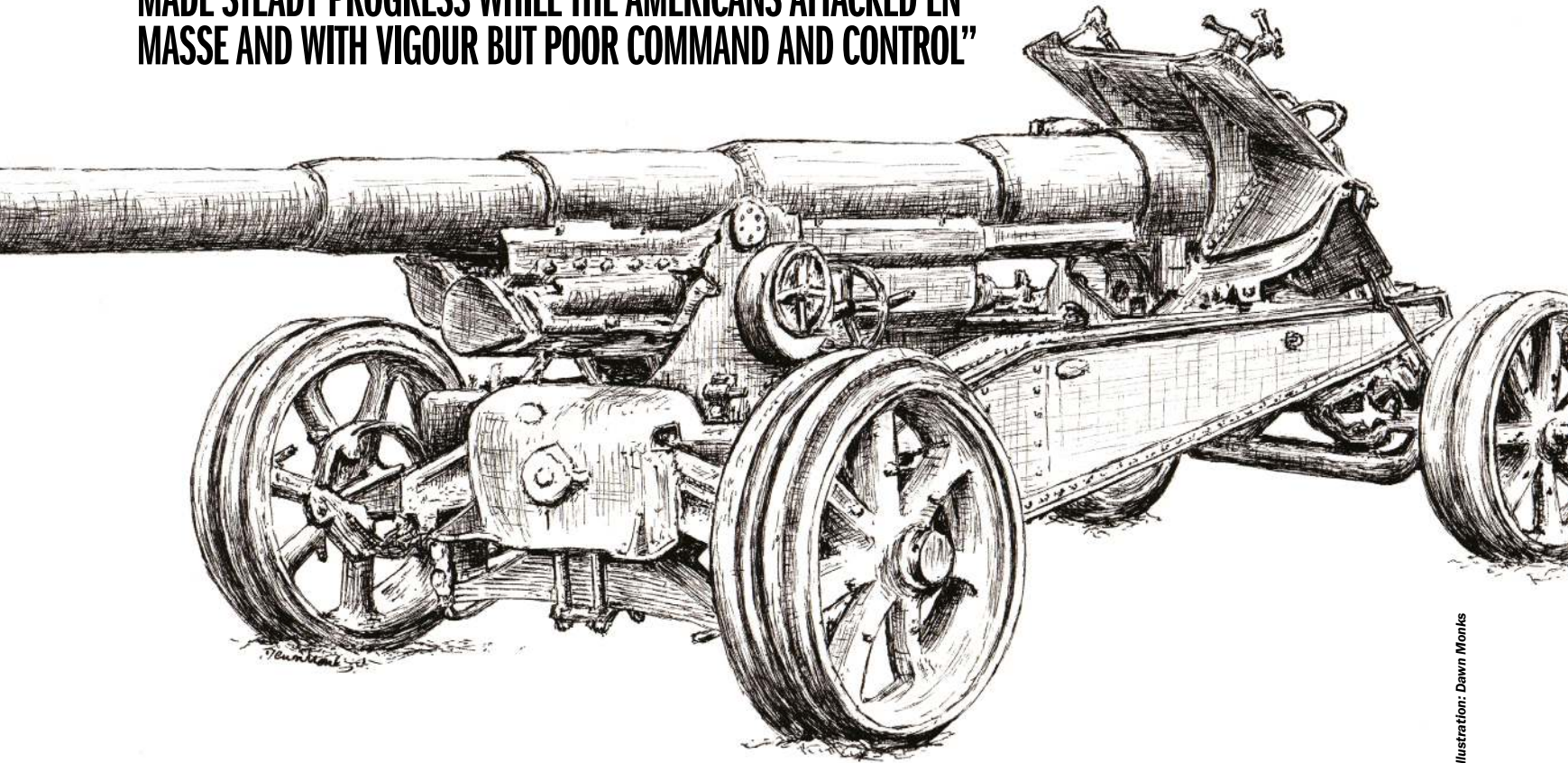
The Flanders offensive started equally well. Within 48 hours the Belgian and British forces

**“GENERAL JOHN PERSHING... CONCURRED AFTER SOME REMONSTRATION, SINCE FOCH'S PLAN WOULD DENY HIS NEWLY FORMED ARMIES ANY REAL INDEPENDENCE OF ACTION”**



**“THE FIRST PHASE OF THE MEUSE-ARGONNE OFFENSIVE WAS CONFUSED: THE FRENCH ATTACKED WITH METHOD AND CARE AND MADE STEADY PROGRESS WHILE THE AMERICANS ATTACKED EN MASSE AND WITH VIGOUR BUT POOR COMMAND AND CONTROL”**

*The Canon de 155mm was commonly deployed by the French army towards the end of the war and was designed by Colonel Louis Filloux*



*Illustration: Dawn Monks*

*The clearing at Rethondes, where the armistice was signed. The trains of the Allied and German delegations stand side by side*



## THE ARMISTICE 11 NOVEMBER 1918

THE DECISIVE VICTORY ALLOWED THE ALLIES TO IMPOSE HUMILIATING TERMS ON GERMANY

Over the summer and autumn, as its allies dropped out and its own armies were pushed back, Germany's leaders realised they would have to come to terms. What terms they could get, and who would negotiate them, occupied the final weeks of wartime diplomacy. Once they realised the war was lost, Germany's militaristic leaders tried to broaden the government, passing power to the democratic political parties who had opposed the pursuit of empire. It was hoped that a democratic government would get better terms from Germany's liberal enemies, and to that end the new chancellor, Prince Max von Baden, appealed to American President Woodrow Wilson on 4 October for an armistice to be agreed, pending a peace negotiated on the basis of Wilson's famous 'fourteen points'. But Wilson would not break ranks with his allies and negotiate separately with Germany.

Moreover, precise terms for a cessation of hostilities pending negotiations were the province of military experts, not statesmen. Therefore it fell to Foch, supported by a British delegation headed by First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Rosslyn Wemyss, to present terms on behalf of the Allied governments. A German delegation headed by minister without portfolio Matthias Erzberger crossed French lines on 7 November to begin discussions, and met with Foch and the Allied delegation in a railway carriage at Rethondes in the forest, near the town of Compiègne.

It was Foch's intention to impose the harshest armistice terms on Germany to ensure that hostilities could not be resumed. To that end the Allied armies were to secure bridgeheads over the River Rhine, the ultimate objective of Foch's advance. Germany was to surrender guns, machine guns, aircraft and railway rolling stock, and the German army was immediately to evacuate all occupied French and Belgian territory, Alsace-Lorraine and the Rhineland. The latter was to be controlled by an Allied army of occupation, which Germany would pay for. To prevent a resumption of the war at sea, Germany's submarines and much of the battle fleet were to be interned at Scapa Flow under the watch of the Royal Navy.

Negotiations lasted several days, during which there were further political developments in Germany. Mutinies in the High Seas Fleet and popular disturbances forced the kaiser to abdicate. Although it was humiliating, the armistice was agreed by the new German republic, which came into being on 10 November. Early in the morning of 11 November, the German plenipotentiaries signed under protest, because the Allies refused to lift the naval blockade and feed the German people until a final peace had been agreed. Hostilities ceased that day at 11am. By then all Germany's allies had signed their own separate armistices: Bulgaria at the end of September, Turkey on 30 October and Austria-Hungary on 4 November.



**“ON 29 SEPTEMBER, GERMANY’S FIRST  
QUARTERMASTER GENERAL ERICH LUDENDORFF  
ADMITTED TO THE KAISER THAT THE ARMY WAS  
LOSING THE WAR AND THAT AN ARMISTICE FROM  
THE ALLIES WOULD HAVE TO BE SOUGHT”**



*An aerial view of  
the Hindenburg  
Line at Bullecourt,  
showing the depth  
and strength of the  
German defences*







The final phase of the German army's defence was based on isolated and improvised machine gun positions



British troops advance through the deep wire entanglements that protected the Hindenburg Line

**"I SAW MORE WAR IN A FEW HOURS THAN IN MY PREVIOUS SEVENTEEN MONTHS IN THE ATTACK ON THE HINDENBURG LINE"**

had seized the high ground around Ypres, which they had fought to capture for months in 1917 and had been obliged to evacuate in spring 1918 during the German offensive. By the time the Anglo-Belgian offensive ran out of momentum on 3 October, King Albert's army group had advanced 14.5 kilometres (nine miles). Uncommitted French armies in the centre – General Charles Mangin's Tenth and General Henri Berthelot's Fifth – increased the pressure between 28-30 September, assaulting positions on the Chemin des Dames between Laon and Reims. After these concerted attacks, Haig recorded, "Foch was of the opinion that the Germans cannot much longer resist our attacks against their whole front and 'soon they will crack'."

That had already happened. On 29 September, Germany's First Quartermaster General Erich Ludendorff admitted to the kaiser that the army was losing the war and that an armistice from the Allies would have to be sought. He used the recent surrender of Germany's ally Bulgaria as his excuse – part of Foch's plan was to put pressure on the enemy on all fronts – but at that moment the waves of Foch's counter-offensive were crashing heavily all along the Western Front, and Ludendorff's depleted armies were giving ground everywhere. Simultaneously, British Fourth (General Sir Henry Rawlinson) and French First Armies (General Marie-Eugene Debeney) struck against the Hindenburg Line, bringing Foch's grand scheme to a climax.

If they did not exactly pass through it like a knife through butter, it was a surmountable defensive obstacle given Allied military prowess and German weakness. Australian troops, supported by tanks and an attached American army corps, advanced on the northern end of Fourth Army's line. Opposite them was the open ground of the Bellicourt tunnel over the Saint-Quentin Canal. The fighting was as hard as any yet experienced. "The advance was a very bitter affair, right to the finish," Second Lieutenant R.H. Poynting wrote home. "I saw more war in a few hours than in my previous seventeen months in the attack on the Hindenburg Line. Tanks ablaze, mortars ablaze, limbers smashed and strewn over the roads and streams of wounded Yankees and Tommies."

Troops further south would have to cross the canal itself, with its far side defended by German wire and machine gun positions. Covered by an intensive artillery barrage, men from British 46th Division mounted a bold coup de main, crossing the canal wearing life-jackets gathered from Channel troop ships, and taking the defenders in their supposedly impregnable positions on the other side by surprise, capturing two vital intact bridges.

Their success allowed Debeney's troops to the south to advance on Saint-Quentin, the heavily fortified bastion in the centre of the Hindenburg Line. Foch's only inactive army, Fifth British Army (General Sir William Birdwood) came into action at this point, following up retreating German forces between Armentières and Lens that had been obliged to withdraw following the advances in Flanders and on Cambrai, which fell to the Canadian Corps on 8 October. By 5 October the northern section of the Hindenburg system was in Allied hands,

Ludendorff's forces were in retreat to their next line of defence, and a German armistice request had been made to American President Woodrow Wilson. The climactic phase of the war, during which intensive battle impelled feverish diplomacy, had begun.

### War as a diplomatic weapon

Evicted from the Hindenburg Line, Ludendorff hoped to improvise some sort of linear defence with the diminishing forces still available to him. If the Allied waves could be contained, better armistice and peace terms might be obtained. Foch refused to allow his opposite number any respite. A line of rearward defences was under construction from the English Channel to Verdun: the Hermann Line stood opposite the British front, with the southernmost extensions, the Hunding and Brunhild positions, in front of the French, and the Kreimhild position blocking the Franco-American advance towards Mezières.

As Foch's first offensive all along the front inevitably ran out of steam, with Allied troops tired and outpacing their support, Ludendorff started to think that he might yet hold the Allies over the winter. Armistice negotiations were not progressing favourably and he felt that a stout defence that inflicted yet more casualties would make the Allies see sense. His troops and his political masters, now democrats who abhorred the unnecessary continuation of the war, were starting to see things differently. Ludendorff would fight only one more defensive battle – another defeat – before being replaced, having become an obstacle to ending the war.

Foch's vision remained focused, his determination unwavering. It would take a few days to link the new Allied lines into the railway system and to bring up reinforcements and munitions, but as soon as that was done the next German positions would be attacked using the same methods that had carried the Hindenburg Line. The Allied commanders were under orders to push forwards when the opportunity arose, and Haig seized the chance immediately, driving with Third and Fourth Armies up to and through the Hermann Line and the northern section of the Hunding position. This allowed Debeney's troops, which had been held up for some days by strong resistance, to advance and capture Saint-Quentin.

Thereafter the battle shifted once more to the flanks. The offensive in the Meuse-Argonne sector was renewed with vigour. Troops of French Second Army (General Auguste Hirschauer), supported an American advance on the east bank of the River Meuse, from which German artillery had been shelling the American forces on the west bank and checking their progress. Thereafter the Germans withdrew to the Kreimhild position, which was assaulted and captured in the middle of October. On the Americans' right, Fourth, Fifth and Tenth French Armies maintained pressure on the Germans, forcing another retreat to the Brunhild position.

Reinforced by more French troops, now constituted into Sixth French Army (General Antoine de Boissoudy), the Flanders army group renewed its offensive on 14 October. The advance made rapid progress, and within a week the Belgian forces had reached the Dutch frontier. Once again the Allied pressure had forced the Germans to evacuate territory – in

## HOW THE WAR WAS WON

this instance the Belgian coast, including the ports Ostend and Zeebrugge, which had been a thorn in the side of the Royal Navy since 1914.

Always prepared to improvise on details as long as the broad principles of his plan were adhered to, Foch decided in the next phase of the bataille générale to make his main thrust in the centre of the line, where the Anglo-French armies seemed to be making the best progress. This thrust, he expected, would turn the German resistance on either flank. Haig's Fourth and Third Armies renewed their offensive from 15 October, advancing a couple of kilometres a day, and in time obliging the enemy forces opposite Haig's northernmost armies, Fifth and First, to withdraw once again. The important city of Lille, and many other small towns, were liberated in the last two weeks of October as the British and Belgian forces advanced eastwards. French armies in the centre pushed on at the same time, forcing the Hunding position and precipitating another general German retreat from the Aisne.

The final pursuit was a different affair to what the soldiers had experienced previously. Guards officer Oliver Lyttelton re-joined his unit in late October after a spell of convalescence. "Well here we are again... going forward pretty fast. It is great fun," he wrote home. "The [enemy] seems to be very weak and near the end of his tether... We all have the feeling of men let out of prison into the open. It is great rolling open country with numerous villages, and the warfare as open as the country... We have had a couple of battles since I last wrote and very successful too. The troops are what we call handy. They take a village at four o'clock. By five the outposts are a mile beyond and everyone in billets... and Brigade Headquarters with the dividers out planning the next advance."

The enemy had not stopped fighting, but the defence, centred on isolated machine gun positions placed so as to delay the pursuit and inflict casualties, was easily mastered. "This rolling country is well suited to M.G. rearguards and you cannot of course make set-piece attacks on their positions without very heavy loss," Lyttelton reported home. "So we don't. We adopt a policy of infiltration, especially at night. Work up to the M.G.s, work round them, always pushing on with small detachments and using darkness."

Ludendorff was the biggest casualty of this failure to hold the next line of defence. On reduced duties and under the close care of a personal psychologist on account of his state of nervous collapse, he had all but lost any grip he had on military operations, and Germany's army group and army commanders were essentially fighting the battle on their own while their leader addressed political matters. Still he was reluctant to admit defeat. On 26 October Ludendorff was replaced by General Wilhelm Groener, whose views were more attuned to the mood of the moment. Germany was on the verge of revolution, and its new democratic government needed to bring the war to and end immediately.

### A final offensive

Foch would organise one last general offensive in early November, to encourage the Germans to the negotiating table. As he later put it, "By attacking uninterruptedly... we were certain to shake, dislocate and finally destroy the enemy's military power, and, by depriving the German Government of its Armies, force it to beg for terms." The Franco-American offensive in the Argonne was renewed on 1 November, with the other Allied armies' attacks



**"GERMANY WAS ON THE VERGE OF REVOLUTION, AND ITS NEW DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT NEEDED TO BRING THE WAR TO AND END IMMEDIATELY"**

## STORMING THE HINDENBURG LINE

*British soldiers and tanks wait with German prisoners, during operations against the Hindenburg Line*



rippling along the front towards Flanders over the following days. The Americans once again made rapid initial progress before their advance collapsed into confusion. It was to be French troops of Fourth Army that liberated Mezières shortly before the armistice.

British forces launched their last set-piece battle on 4 November. Four armies attacked at the same time with a view to reaching Mons. By now winter was approaching, and the attack was prepared in cold, driving rain and delivered under a thick morning mist – very different from the earlier advances in summer and autumn sunshine. As weak winter sunshine cleared the mist, the scene revealed itself to Lyttelton. “We rode along off the road along which a steady stream of infantry and guns was moving... Fine view in front. A wooded country with lots of small orchards and enclosures and the jug-jug of M.G.s everywhere. A few shells... rather too close for comfort... the [enemy] has been holding quite an organised line and of course we had only a few field guns to deal with it. However the Grenadier [Guards] got round the flanks and had them out with rather severe casualties.” Despite narrowly avoiding being wounded on several occasions, he ended the day “very cheerful. We had gone 5-6,000 yards (4,570-5,485 metres) in the face of very stiff opposition.” The final week of the British advance followed the same pattern, with improvised enemy positions flanked or stormed.

Liberated French towns welcomed their victorious allies. In Maubeuge, Lyttelton “[found] the Grenadiers radiant being kissed in every direction. Flags from every window. Mayor. Town Band. Bouquets.” On armistice day the advance guards arrived in Mons, Belgium, where the British Expeditionary Force had had its first engagement in August 1914.

The pace of the Hundred Days advance was modest – around 1.5 kilometres (less than one mile) a day at its deepest point – but compared with the war’s earlier years it

## “FOCH HAD NOT SOUGHT TO MAKE ANY DYNAMIC BREAKTHROUGH, BUT TO STEADILY PUSH THE ENEMY OUT OF FRANCE”

seemed spectacular. “They were a wonderful ‘last hundred days’,” Poynting said. “In 1915 and 1916... it was hard to believe that we should ever get to open warfare again and only in the wildest dreams could one imagine the army streaming forwards with guns in the open, untrenched country and... grateful civilians.”

Semi-mobile warfare still relied on railway logistics, the build-up of ammunition reserves and other supplies, and troops and machines that couldn’t advance faster than walking pace, so the battle progressed in fits and starts.

Aware of the limitations of his military machine, Foch had not sought to make a dynamic breakthrough, but to steadily push the enemy out of France, degrading their forces all the time. Foch had found the operational key to unlocking the stalemate. As his chief of staff, Maxime Weygand, noted (in 1917), “This manoeuvre by movement [along the front] is the only way on a front on which one cannot turn the flanks, and can be managed against an enemy with inferior numbers. The enemy command will be uncertain and worried, and will be demoralised rapidly the more its reserves are committed and it suffers partial defeats. Finally, the last blow struck will find them materially and morally powerless.” Above all, he judged, “It was a victory of intelligence and willpower” – not only Foch but his subordinates, from generals down to private soldiers.

### The armistice

The Germans had been driven back into Belgium, and Foch was poised to launch another offensive, into German territory in Lorraine, when the armistice was signed. Groener had nothing left to oppose it – 23 German divisions had

been broken up in the course of the offensive to provide reserves for others, and only two reserve divisions capable of going into battle were available on 11 November. Many German soldiers had fought hard in their final battle, although many others had realised the war was coming to an end and decided that surrender was better than self-sacrifice. Around 385,000 prisoners were taken by the advancing Allies, and the Germans suffered a similar number of casualties in the final months of the war. That and the loss of war material – 6,615 guns and tens of thousands of machine guns and other weapons were taken during the advance – had destroyed the fighting capacity of the German army, as Foch had calculated. It was a great Allied victory, but was eclipsed 100 years later by the painful memory of what had gone before.

Even at the point of victory, however, there was a sense of anticlimax. “So it was all over,” Lyttelton remembered. “Winning in war is at all times a heady and exhilarating experience... By noon on November 11th Maubeuge had already slipped back into a normal market town. By the afternoon we were already bored... Part of it was because we had lost our profession, in which we had been immersed for five years: part of it because we had already begun to wonder what awaited us in peace-time.”

Regrettably, the ending of hostilities did not presage a lasting peace: the Treaty of Versailles would turn out to be merely “an armistice for twenty years” in Foch’s prophetic judgment. Lyttelton would have to go to war against Germany again, the second time as a member of Winston Churchill’s government, responsible for organising the British war effort.

Images: Alamy, Mary Evans, Getty



Belgian cavalrymen advancing to liberate their country during the 1918 Flanders offensive



Men of 27th US Division following a British tank advancing towards the Bellicourt tunnel, September 1918



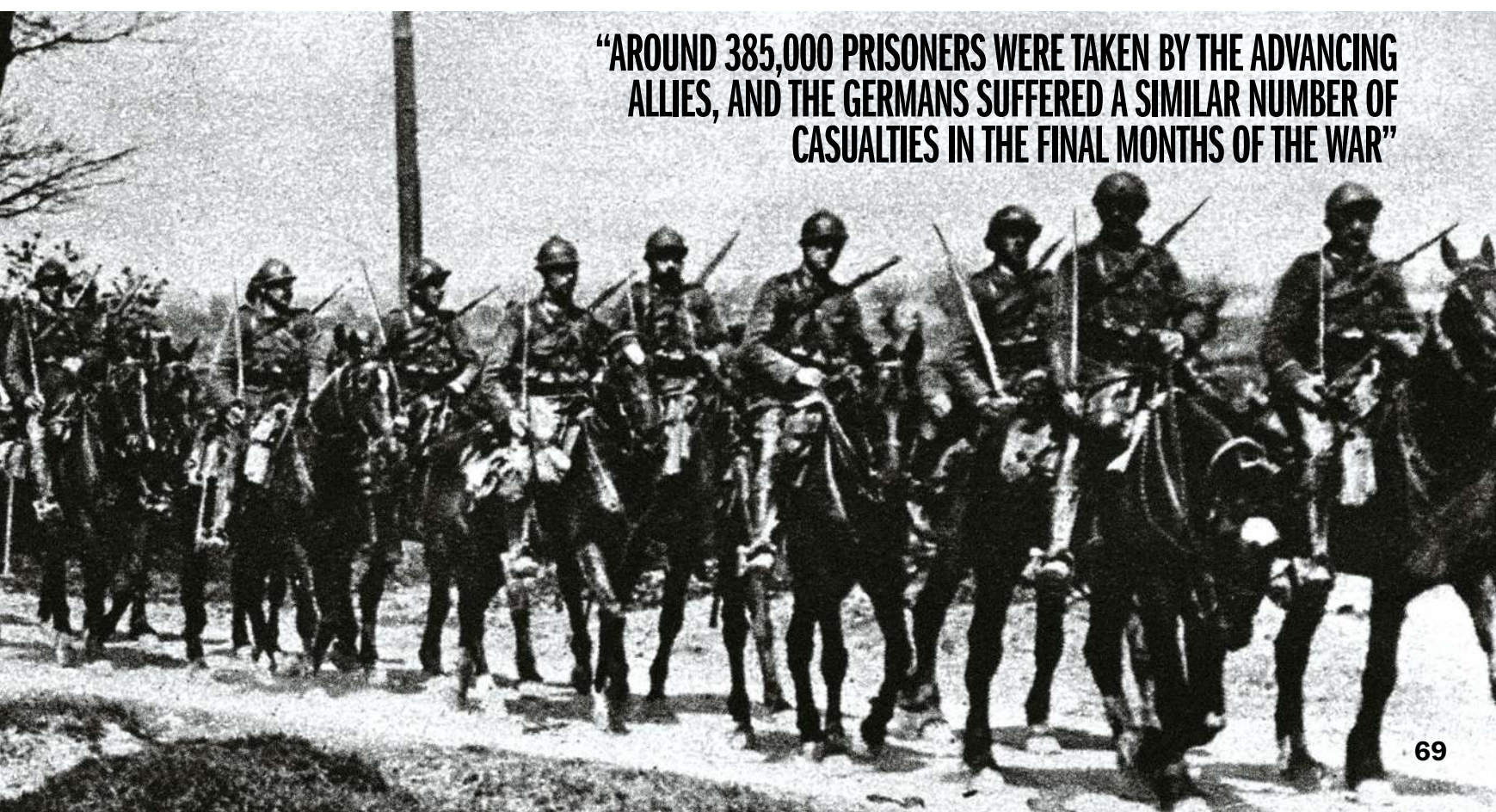
Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig



American troops waiting to go forward during the Meuse-Argonne offensive



The American advance in the Meuse-Argonne sector was slowed by road congestion and poor traffic management



**“AROUND 385,000 PRISONERS WERE TAKEN BY THE ADVANCING ALLIES, AND THE GERMANS SUFFERED A SIMILAR NUMBER OF CASUALTIES IN THE FINAL MONTHS OF THE WAR”**



## Heroes of the Victoria Cross

# ROWLAND BOURKE

Rejected for poor eyesight when he tried to enlist, Rowley Bourke rescued over 40 men on two separate occasions at Ostend in April and May 1918

WORDS FRANK JASTRZEMBSKI

Some men pass through life inconspicuously, while others rise to the occasion in the moments when they are needed most. Coningsby Dawson, a Canadian novelist and officer during World War I, said that war is a “test of internals, of the heart and spirit of a man”. He pointed out that these attributes were more important than anything else a man could possess on the battlefield. In the same letter, he offered a fellow Canadian, Rowland Bourke, as a prime example of a man whose heart and spirit made up for everything that he physically lacked. Ridiculed by his neighbours for wanting to enlist, Dawson said that Bourke “elbowed his way through their laughter to self-conquest” and saved over 40 lives during the two raids on Ostend in 1918.

Born in London in November 1885, Rowland Richard Louis Bourke – known as ‘Rowley’ among family and friends – moved to the remote Yukon territory in 1902. His father, Dr. Isadore McWilliam Bourke, a retired surgeon of the 72nd Highlanders, established the first hospital in Dawson City during the Klondike Gold Rush. After a stint as a gold miner, Rowley Bourke turned to farming. He founded a fruit farm with two of his cousins on Kootenay Lake near Nelson, British Columbia.

One day while clearing the land, an explosion killed one of his cousins, Cecil. It also severely wounded Rowley, and he lost sight in one eye and damaged the other. He left the farm after the accident for a short time, but returned, and later operated his own motor launch.

When World War I erupted Rowley Bourke felt it was his duty to enlist. Besides the injuries he

had suffered to his eyes, he was not the kind of person that immediately inspired confidence or looked the part of a soldier. An enormous pair of glasses dangled from his face, and he was described as “the kind of chap with whom girls danced out of kindness. Today he’s a hero”.

“I remember the way his neighbours used to patronise him before the war,” Dawson recalled. “They all laughed when he went to California to study for an aeroplane pilot. They didn’t try to join themselves, but his keenness struck them as funny. What could a man who was half-blind do at the war, they asked – a man who ran his launch into logs on the lake and who crashed in full daylight when approaching a wharf?”

Every attempt he made to enlist was turned down. “When he had been awarded his flying certificate at the American Air School our RFC [Royal Flying Corps] refused to take him,” Dawson recalled. “He tried to get into the infantry, into everything, anything, and was universally turned down on the score of weak sight.” After being rejected by the Royal Flying Corps, he travelled to England at his own expense. Possibly due to an oversight, he was accepted into the Royal Naval Volunteer

Reserve. “Everyone pictured him colliding with everything solid that came his way.”

But Arthur R.M. Lower, a naval officer who served with Bourke, knew that there was something special about him. He said that different men faced danger in different ways. Some couldn’t handle it and cracked, while others thrived in it. He observed that Bourke had “no physical sense of fear at all” and said that he “was exhilarated by it. Danger to him was a tonic.” He observed in one instance, during an air raid on Dunkirk, Bourke casually walked in the direction of an exploding small-arms store, exclaiming, “This is splendid, this is war. How glad I am to have been sent here, where you really see there is a war on.”

Bourke would have a chance to prove his mettle after he persuaded his commander to allow him to partake in a daring raid targeting the Belgian harbours of Ostend and Zeebrugge in 1918. The raid would cripple the ports, which 30 German submarines and the same number of destroyers and torpedo boats had been using as a base to conduct hit-and-run raids and terrorise Allied ships. During the worst period of the submarine raids, in the spring of 1917, the sea was literally covered with the debris of sunken British and French ships.

Vice-Admiral Roger Keyes, leader of the Dover Patrol, commanded the operation. His fleet was made up of an odd assortment of ships whose task was to protect Allied transports and supplies travelling to France. Keyes planned to launch simultaneous raids on Ostend and Zeebrugge from his bases at Dover and Dunkirk. He would deliberately scuttle a

“BEFORE THE WAR HE WAS  
THE KIND OF CHAP WITH  
WHOM GIRLS DANCED OUT OF  
KINDNESS. TODAY HE’S A HERO”

*Rowland Bourke (pictured here during WWI) ended his naval career in 1950. He attained the rank of commander serving with the Royal Canadian Navy*

..... ● .....

**“IT WASN’T HIS  
EYESIGHT AND LIMITATIONS  
THAT REALLY COUNTED – IT  
WAS HIS KEENNESS”**

**– Coningsby Dawson**

..... ● .....

### “DANGER TO HIM WAS A TONIC”

– Arthur R.M. Lower

handful of old cruisers to block access in and out of the harbours and canals.

The 32-year-old Bourke commanded ML 276, one of the 59 British and French ships dedicated to the Ostend operation. Two 3,400-ton cruisers, HMS Brilliant and HMS Sirius, would make the one-way trip to Ostend. Two of the 20 motor launches taking part in the mission, ML 283 and ML 532, had orders to rescue the survivors from the ships once they had been scuttled. Bourke's motor launch was to follow close behind in case either of them was knocked out during the action.

At midnight on 23 April 1918, Keyes's two cruisers moved forward, escorted by two destroyers. Some of the motor launches deployed a smoke screen to provide cover for the cruisers, but it was blown back by the wind and exposed the ships to the German shore batteries. The Germans had purposely repositioned a marker buoy that had protected ships from running aground on a drifting sandbank. Both ships inadvertently ran aground on this sandbank 1,800 metres (1,970 yards) short of their objective. They were abandoned by their crews as they came under heavy machine gun and artillery fire. A German gunnery officer recalled seeing tiny figures sliding down ropes and into the awaiting motor launches, some men slipping and falling into the water during the frantic scramble to safety.

ML 532 was suddenly hit by a German shell that carried away its bow from keel to deck and stunned its crew. The blast damaged both engines, and it remained immobilised. Bourke, with ML 276, raced ahead in the darkness towards the Brilliant to continue rescuing survivors. They were guided by the bright rays coming from the German searchlights and the exploding German shells. Paying no attention to the German machine gun bullets pinging off his craft and the shells crashing dangerously close by, Bourke pulled ML 276 as near as he could to the marooned Brilliant. He crammed as many men as he could fit into his motor launch, making four trips back and forth to take 38 officers and men to safety.

On his fifth trip, Bourke towed the disabled ML 532 out of harm's way despite his motor launch being badly damaged. Commander Ion Hamilton Benn, who directed the ML flotilla, had caught Bourke's attention by signaling 'SOS' from ML 532. One rope after another broke, but Bourke managed to tow the disabled motor launch about halfway back to Dunkirk. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Order following the raid.

A second attempt to block Ostend took place a few weeks later. Commander Alfred Edmund Godsall and Lieutenant Commander H.N.M. Hardy, who both commanded the ships in the first raid, convinced Keyes to give it another try. Some thought it was suicidal to attempt it again, but there was no shortage of volunteers. HMS Vindictive, launched in 1897, moved into the harbour of Ostend on 9-10 May 1918, weighed down with concrete, to complete

*A depiction of the Vindictive during the raid in 1918, fitted with mortars and howitzers and weighed down with concrete*





what the Brilliant and Sirius had failed to do. HMS Sappho was supposed to accompany the Vindictive, but it blew a hole in one of its boilers on its way from Dunkirk and had to be left behind. The Vindictive, commanded by Godsal, would go alone.

The Vindictive had trouble finding its way through a dense fog that suddenly appeared, limiting its sight to about 275 metres (300 yards). Guided by a flare lit by a motor boat, the Vindictive moved forward as British aeroplanes dropped bombs to provide cover. Every German shore battery opened up on the lone ship. Godsal was killed when a German shell hit the tower. Lieutenant Commander Victor Crutchley, who took over, managed to pull the ship close to where they wanted it, detonating the 680 kilograms (1,500 pounds) of amatol, and ordering the men to abandon the ship. "There was a fearful din on the upper deck, as well as shrapnel," Engineer Commander W.A. Bury recalled. As they raced to escape the ship, "the machine gun bullets were making a noise just like pneumatic caulkers". Crutchley and those not wounded tried to keep the ship afloat long enough so everyone could be evacuated.

The two motor launches closest to the ship, ML 254 and ML 276, came to the rescue of the Vindictive's crew. ML 254, under the command of Lieutenant Geoffrey Drummond, picked up 41 survivors, including Crutchley. Drummond was severely wounded in the leg, and his second-in-command, Lieutenant Gordon Ross, and two other men were killed. He was hit by two machine gun bullets from a pier 18 metres

“THE BRAVEST OF ALL HOLDERS OF THE VICTORIA CROSS”

– Admiral Keyes

(20 yards) away and fainted from loss of blood, but his crippled launch made it back to the HMS Warwick. Drummond would later receive the Victoria Cross.

Crutchley had no way of knowing it at the time, but three more men remained behind. Wounded in the same blast that killed Godsal, Lieutenant John Alleyne and two men helplessly clung to an upended skiff in the water. ML 276 had been raking a nearby pier with a Lewis gun when Bourke ordered it to the wreckage to make sure that Drummond didn't miss any survivors. He was getting ready to leave when he heard the stranded men's cries. At first, he couldn't spot anyone after moving to the rear of the Vindictive. He came back a second time, this time pulling ML 276 to the opposite side of the ship. Each time he came near the wreckage he attracted heavy enemy fire.

He discovered Alleyne and the two men hanging onto the skiff. While rescuing them, two of Bourke's crew were killed by a German six-inch shell, but they managed to pull the men from the water and escape. ML 276, badly

damaged, was towed to Dunkirk by another British vessel. "I examined her next morning," Commander Benn recalled, "and found the mast had been shot away about 7 foot (2.1 metres) from the deck and there were 55 holes in her between wind and water." On later inspection, they discovered that its petrol tank had at least 12 holes in it and was leaking.

The Ostend raid didn't have the success that Keyes had hoped for, but it did temporarily delay the German raids. Those who took part in the operation were applauded for their valour and sacrifice. "To praise the skill and gallantry of the adventure would be impertinent," journalist Leslie Cope Cornford wrote, "Such deeds are immortal".

A total of 11 Victoria Crosses were awarded to men who took part in the Ostend and Zeebrugge raids – the same number awarded to the defenders of Rorke's Drift. Bourke was praised for his "daring and skill" and "bravery and perseverance". He was awarded the Victoria Cross. Admiral Keyes afterwards called Bourke the "bravest of all holders of the Victoria Cross".

Bourke returned to civilian life after the war and worked as a clerk. He enlisted a second time in 1941 and served in the Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve during World War II. He lived at the same address in Esquimalt with his wife Rosalind for 26 years, until his death on 29 August 1958 at the age of 72. Misjudged by his neighbours, Bourke demonstrated that it isn't what is on the outside that matters, but rather what is inside the person that counts.

An aerial view of the British ships scuttled at Zeebrugge. The raid was far more successful than the raids on Ostend

The sunken HMS Vindictive in Ostend



Left: Vice-Admiral Roger John Brownlow Keyes

Images: Getty

## THE GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR – JUNE 1941-MAY 1945

# TOVARISCH

## THE FACE OF RUSSIAN RESISTANCE

WORDS PAUL GARSON

CAUGHT BETWEEN TWO DICTATORSHIPS, RUSSIANS RALLIED TO DEFEND THEIR HOMELAND

**W**orld War II involved, to one degree or another some 104 countries and followed closely on the heels of World War I, which had been billed as 'The Great War' and 'The War to End All Wars'. Alas, those names were no longer applicable in the face of the unfolding horrors of the 1940s. Despite all the hopeful phrases about the conflict from 1914-1918, the new war smashed all previous records for carnage, death and destruction.

Participation in both world wars saw different entry points and varying perspectives on the conflict for the combatants. The United States had not been eager to enter either war and joined WWI only in 1917, three years after hostilities began raging in Europe. 25 years later the USA, again belatedly, entered the next global conflict following the Japanese 'sneak' attack on Pearl Harbor, and as a result Americans tend to mark their world war history books by that date, 7 December 1941.

The Chinese would have a different perspective, as Manchuria had been invaded by the Japanese as early as 1931. Imperial Japan, meanwhile, preferred to name their conflict 'The Greater East Asia War'.

Britain and France, complying with their international treaties, had been fighting Nazi Germany since September 1939 after the Wehrmacht had invaded Poland. Though ideological mortal enemies, Stalin and Hitler's non-aggression pact saw Poland crushed between the two dictatorships – Germany attacking from the west and Soviet forces from the east, dividing up the spoils at the cost of millions of Polish lives.

The Nazi-Soviet pact ended on 21 June 1941 when Axis troops launched a coordinated assault, smashing through the Baltic states and swathes of Soviet territory. In the face of this colossal attack, the Soviets came up with another name for the conflict: 'The Great Patriotic War'.

These original photos from the author's collection give a glimpse at some of the men and women who fought in the Great Patriotic War.

### ALLIES UNITE

This Soviet poster declares, "Nazi knock out", showing the 'Big Three' of the Grand Alliance combining to destroy Hitler. Following the Nazi invasion of the USSR in June 1941, by October the USA was sending lend-lease support, and, after the attack on Pearl Harbor and Germany's declaration of war on the USA, an anti-Axis alliance of Britain, the USA and USSR was formed.



**ЕДИНЫМ УДАРОМ!**

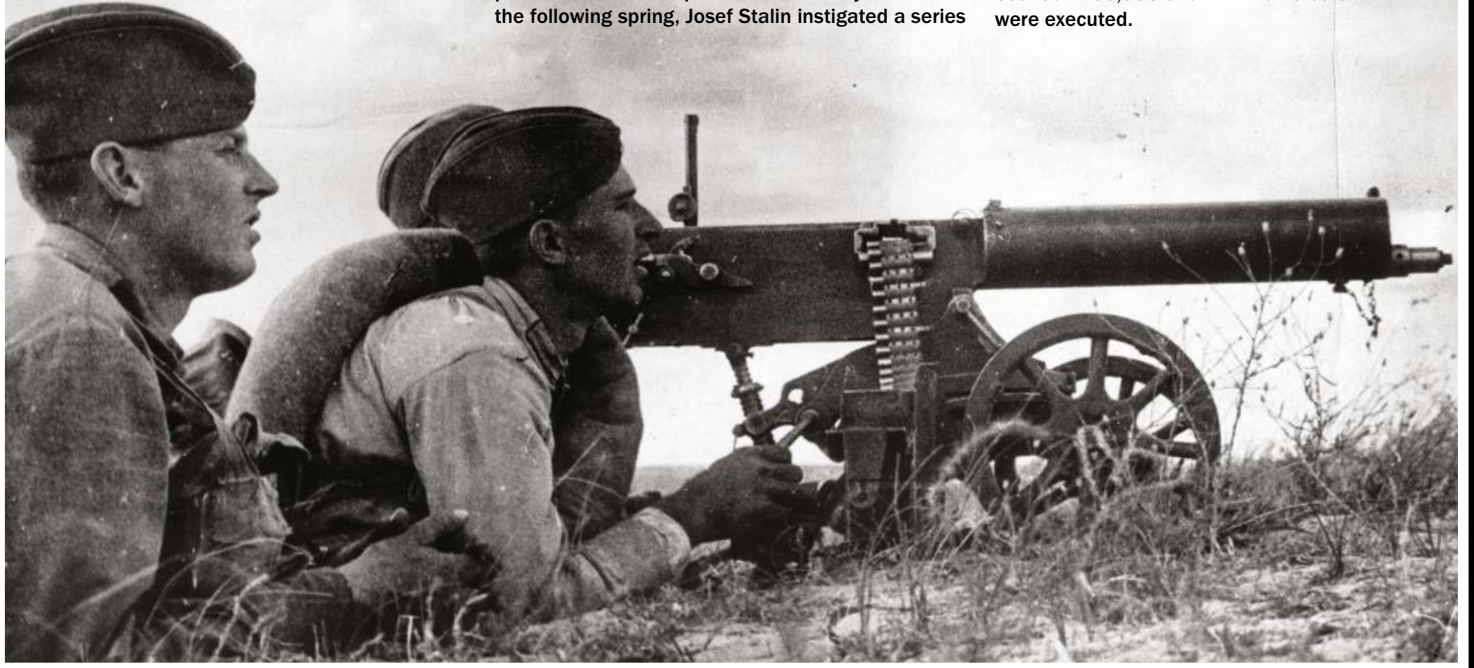
**PROPHETIC PHOTO**

An original *International News Photo* image, sent on 25 September 1936, with the notation, "Red Machine Gun Crew." Another captioning read, "Did Somebody Want the Urals?" The

caption is interesting in view of a broadcast made by Hitler in 1936 – "If I had the Urals".

A machine gun crew of the Red Army is pictured in action during the autumn manoeuvres of troops of the Kiev Military District in the Odessa Region of the USSR. Crews like this had been dropped by parachute from aeroplanes in Red Army tests. In the following spring, Josef Stalin instigated a series

of purges, known as 'The Great Terror', which would continue into 1938. Estimates vary widely, but somewhere between 1.5 million and 20 million Soviet citizens, from the humblest to highest government and military officers, were arrested, and between 700,000 and 7 million died or were executed.



**THE ALL-SEEING STALIN APPROVES A MARRIAGE**

As friends and a civilian functionary witness the proceedings, a Russian soldier and his betrothed are given the party's stamp of approval and officially married, under the all-seeing eye of the premier and general secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Stalin remained in power from 1924 until his death in March 1953 at the age of 74. Born in the Georgian Republic, his original family name was Dzhugashvili, but later changed it to 'Stalin', meaning 'will of steel'.



**“READY...”**

A Red Army soldier positions his folding camera on a tripod and sizes up his target. Photos were tightly controlled by Soviet authorities, and compared to German personnel few personal cameras were in the hands of Russian troops.



**SOLDIER FATHER & SON**

Many fathers would be joined by their sons before the war was over – boys as young as 13 and 14 donned Red Army uniforms.

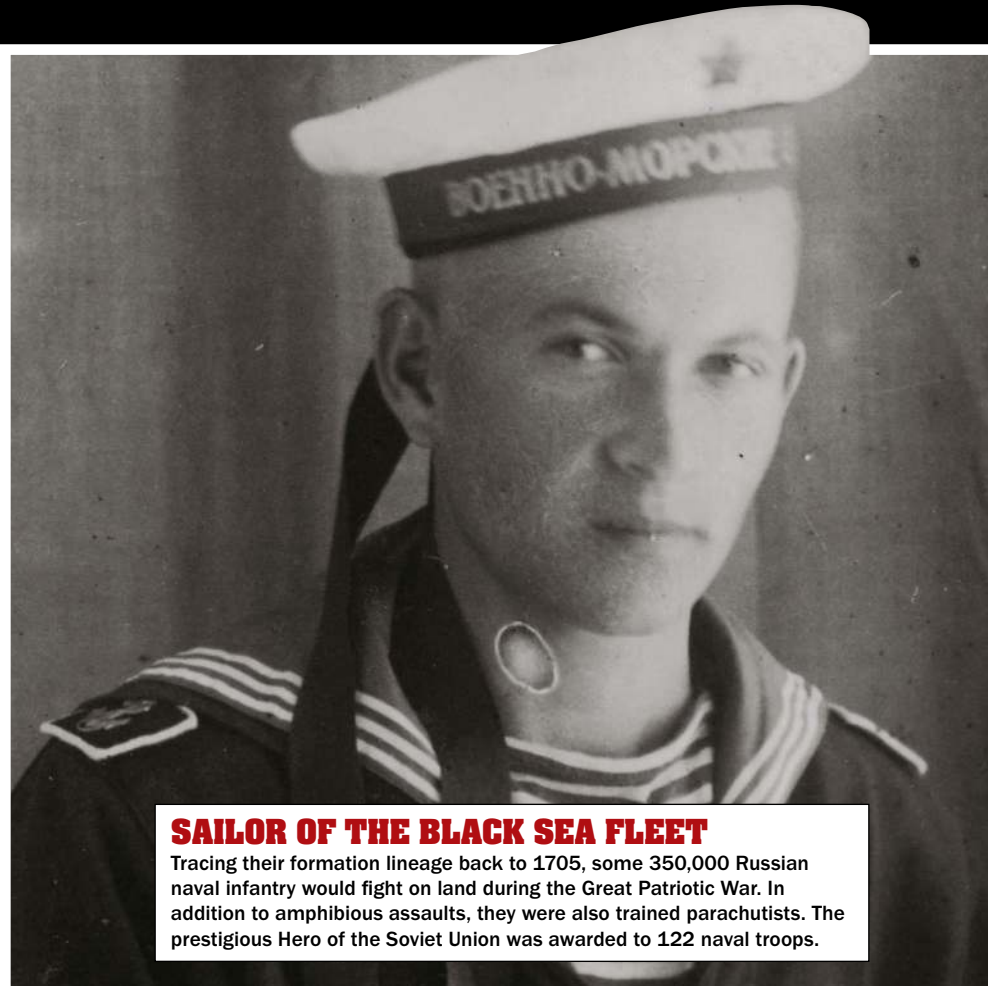
**TANKMAN**

The Russian T-34 tank was considered a pivotal weapon of the war. Tractor plants were converted into rolling them out in numbers surpassing 80,000. They continually improved during the war eventually becoming the most produced tank of all time (and also the most lost) some 45,000 destroyed along with their crews. However the vaunted German panzers now faced fatal competition in firepower but moreover unable to match the production of replacements, the mechanized blitzkrieg stumbling along with ever diminishing fuel supplies.



**RALLYING TO SAVE THE MOTHERLAND**

An official Soviet photo captures the moment when two combat medal winners read the dispatch concerning their exploits, which had been publicised to the public as part of a morale-boosting campaign.



**SAILOR OF THE BLACK SEA FLEET**

Tracing their formation lineage back to 1705, some 350,000 Russian naval infantry would fight on land during the Great Patriotic War. In addition to amphibious assaults, they were also trained parachutists. The prestigious Hero of the Soviet Union was awarded to 122 naval troops.



**ADVANCED ARMAMENT**

A Soviet soldier and 1940-introduced Tokarev SVT-40 semi-automatic rifle, nicknamed 'Sveta'.



**MOTORCYCLE TROOPS WITH RUSSIAN PPSH MACHINE GUNS**

An iconic Soviet gun of WWII. In practical use, the round drum magazine, cumbersome to carry around, was often replaced with a regular magazine.



### COMRADES-IN-ARMS

Young Russian men and women donned the uniform of Russia and served in equal capacity, including combat. An estimated 800,000 women served in the Soviet armed forces. 200,000 were decorated, and 89 earned the Soviet Union's highest award, the Hero of the Soviet Union.

### PARTISAN LEADER - TWICE HERO OF THE SOVIET UNION

Under Sydir Kovpak's leadership, partisan units fought a brutal guerrilla war against the Germans as well as anti-Soviet Ukrainian Nationalist forces. Partisans were comprised of civilians who took up arms, as well as Red Army survivors. In all, a purported 250,000 partisans died fighting the Nazi invaders while Soviet records claimed half a million Germans killed, wounded or captured by their actions. Additionally, 60,000 Russians were killed by partisans when considered German collaborators. Kovpak survived the war, later serving in the Soviet Ukraine government.



### NKVD VETERANS

Both soldiers wear black stripes on their shoulder boards, indicating wounds sustained. The NKVD was charged with directing the so-called 'blocking detachments', set up to deter Russian soldiers from giving ground in the face of the German onslaught. In addition to the Soviet soldiers being locked inside their tanks and bunkers, literally chained in place, special NKVD squads were positioned behind assault troops and ordered to shoot any soldier who turned back from the fighting. The Draconian methods saw the NKVD detain 600,000 Russian troops, the arrest and imprisonment of 25,000, and the execution of 10,000, in effect putting more Russians out of action than Germany in 1942.



**FINAL HOMECOMING**  
 During a state funeral in Kiev, among the pallbearers carrying the coffin of Soviet Army General Nikolai Vatutin is Nikita Khrushchev (third from right) who became post-war Soviet premier. Another pallbearer is the partisan leader Major General Kovpak.  
 Vatutin, considered one of the most creative commanders of the war, led Red Army successes at Stalingrad and Kursk, among other battles. Surviving them, he was later ambushed by Ukrainian nationalists. His two brothers also died in combat within a few weeks.

**PHOTO OF A SMERSH OPERATIVE WITH THE SPOILS OF WAR**

The individual seen in this exceptionally rare photo has been identified as Captain Lysjuk, who from March 1942 to May 1945 served as an agent of SMERSH within the Seventh Army of the Karelian Front. An officer of Soviet military counter-intelligence, he wields a German Mauser machine pistol, which were occasionally given out as awards to worthy agents. Handwritten notations on reverse read, "Photo Taken in the City of Brest – December 1944."



**60 KOPECK SOVIET COMMEMORATIVE STAMP – FEMALE SNIPER**

The most famous female sniper was a Russian – Lyudmila Pavlichenko. She had 309 confirmed kills, including 36 enemy snipers. She was one of the 500 female snipers that survived the war. The standard Soviet infantry rifle was the robust Mosin-Nagant, first introduced in 1891. The bolt-action rifle was also employed by Russian snipers. Some 37 million were produced and employed in global conflicts, continuing into the present.



**“SHE HAD 309 CONFIRMED KILLS OF GERMANS”**



**HAPPIER HOMECOMING**  
 Survivors are greeted by their loved ones, the Great Patriotic War having ended a few weeks earlier on 8 May – a war that began for them four years and 30 million Soviet lives earlier.

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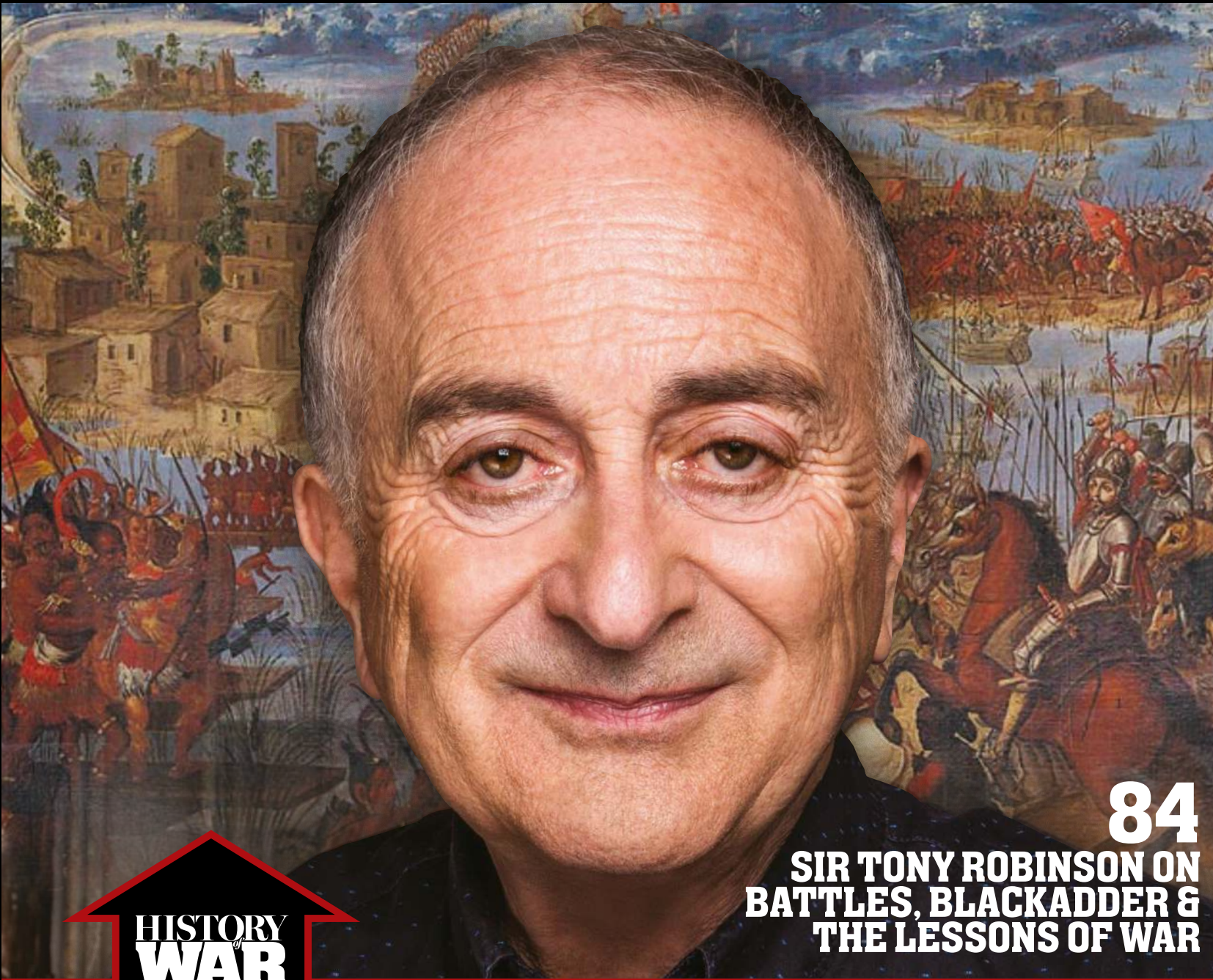


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THE LESSONS OF WAR**

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# MALVERN FESTIVAL OF MILITARY HISTORY

This October, History of War partners with the UK's first and only literary festival dedicated solely to military history, with an impressive lineup of over 40 distinguished historians and writers

**T**he first weekend of October sees a host of top writers in the field of military history visit Malvern for the Festival of Military History. Taking place in the grounds of Severn End, Hanley Castle, this is Britain's only literary festival dedicated solely to military history. It looks at fiction and non-fiction, ranging from Agincourt to modern day Afghanistan, and covering warfare on land, at sea and in the air.

Top speakers over the weekend include Sir Max Hastings, Damien Lewis, Nicholas Shakespeare, Andrew Roberts, Adam Zamoyski, Anne Curry, Matthew Bennett, Peter Doyle, Saul David and many more. The very finest military historians in their fields will also debate key issues in important battles and wars through the ages in a series of panels. These include Agincourt, The English Civil Wars, The Royal Navy, Waterloo, 19th Century Colonial Wars, World War I, World War II and post-1945 wars and insurgencies. There will also be a panel of novelists discussing the challenges of writing fiction based on historical events

and characters. All the talks and panels will be followed by book signings and an opportunity for the audience to interact with these renowned authors.

This top-class literary entertainment is supplemented by an exhibition of war art in the festival exhibit hall. Attendees can browse these during breaks in the programme and while taking their refreshment from the range of food and drink outlets. On Friday night the New Scorpion Band perform a set of traditional folk tunes from the 18th and 19th century. Saturday is the turn of the RAFA Concert Orchestra who will play a selection of war movie themes including *The Dam Busters*, *The Great Escape* and *Saving Private Ryan*.

This spectacular event is not to be missed by anyone interested in military history. The festival is taking place from 5-7 October 2018, with Advance tickets starting at £45. All *History Of War* readers can use the special discount code 'HOW' to get 20% off ticket prices when purchasing online.

**For full details and booking options visit [www.enlightenmentevents.com](http://www.enlightenmentevents.com).**

*In his talk at Malvern, keynote speaker Max Hastings will be discussing the tragedies and controversies surrounding the Vietnam War*

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Image: Almay



## SAUL DAVID ON MILITARY HISTORY IN FACT AND FICTION

KEYNOTE SPEAKER AT MALVERN MILITARY HISTORY FESTIVAL, THE PROFESSOR DISCUSSES HIS WORK WITH THE FILM INDUSTRY AND HIS OWN SERIES OF NOVELS



Ian Blance of Enlightenment Events recently caught up with Saul David, professor of military history at the University of Buckingham. Saul is an accomplished broadcaster and the author of several critically-acclaimed works of fiction and non-fiction. He spoke about some of his recent work melding historical fact and fiction by acting as a consultant on the movie *Entebbe* based on his factual history of Operation Thunderbolt, and also his latest instalment of his fictional *Zulu Hart* series, *The Prince and the Whitechapel Murders*. Visit [www.sauldavid.com](http://www.sauldavid.com) for more.

### Having written a factual history of Operation Thunderbolt, how did your involvement in the film come about?

It was a bit of a coincidence, since I was writing the book and got a call from a film producer asking to read it. They were independently working on a script for a movie and wanted to know whether what I was going to say chimed with their idea for the film.

### How faithfully does the film portray the events as they actually happened?

Amazingly, quite well! Their original idea was to make a psycho-drama focusing on the terrorists and the hostages, but on reading the book they decided to look at a more rounded portrayal of events and rewrite the script. I was hired as a consultant and advised on the script, and for the most part they took on board what I had to say.

### What liberties does it take?

Surprisingly, not too many. At one point they had Yoni Netanyahu, the leader of the Israeli commandos, living throughout the rescue when in fact he was killed very early on. They also created a composite character and added in some love interest. But there is always going to be a tension between reality and dramatic licence in a feature film.

### Moving on now to the latest instalment of the *Zulu Hart* series, *The Prince And The Whitechapel Murders*, the earlier books in the *George Hart* series are set during imperial conflicts. Why set this one in London?

The original plan was to set the third book in this series in South Africa during the First Boer War. What got in the way was time. I spent two years writing *All The King's Men* and when I returned to *George Hart*, there was less enthusiasm for another Imperial adventure, so we went down a different route.

### One of your main characters is a real figure in history, Prince Albert Victor (known as 'Eddy'). Why him?

I was looking for a controversial figure who might need a bodyguard like *George Hart*.

Eddy had some interesting nocturnal habits and was also rumoured to be homosexual. He was also implicated in the Jack the Ripper murders of the time, which made for a ripe plot line.

### How did you manage to say something new about the Ripper murders?

This is where I think my skills as a historian came into play, since there was an awful lot of data available from the time in terms of newspaper and police reports. I was able to come to my own conclusions from the sources rather than rely on the raft of speculation that has been published since.

### Having now written your first crime novel, do you have an insight into why the genre is so popular?

Crime fiction works well because of the tendency for neat resolutions, where the villain typically gets their comeuppance. This is immensely attractive for the reader and was the main difference I found in writing this book after the first two.

## "HE WAS ALSO IMPLICATED IN THE JACK THE RIPPER MURDERS OF THE TIME, WHICH MADE FOR A RIPE PLOT LINE"

Daniel Brühl and Rosamund Pike star in *Entebbe* with a little help from professor and author Saul David



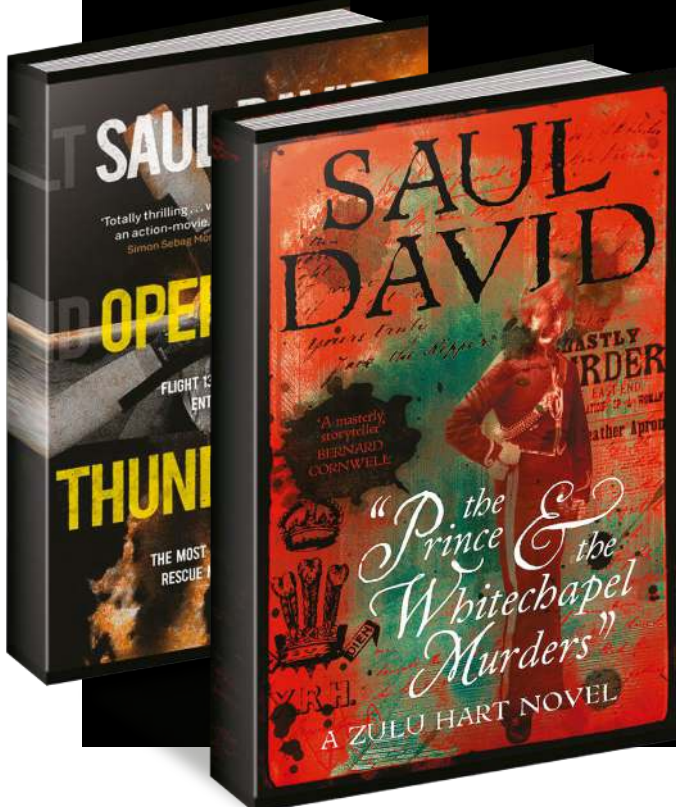
## KEYNOTE SPEAKER: SIR MAX HASTINGS

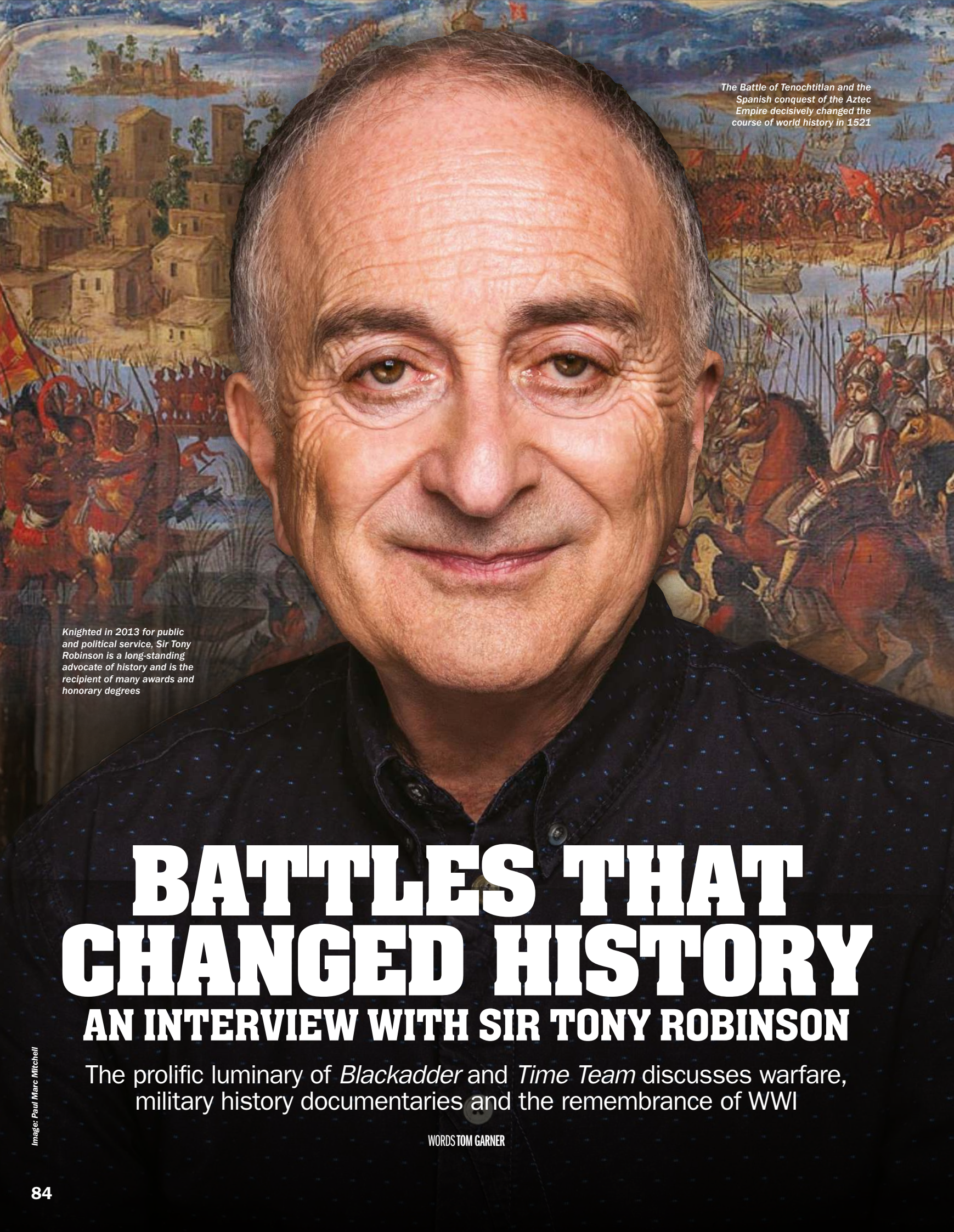
The author of several books, Max Hastings' recent title is the bestselling and critically acclaimed *Catastrophe: Europe Goes To War 1914*. In his early career as a correspondent, he reported on the 1982 Falklands War, experiences which he described in his memoir *Going To The Wars*. A fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and an honorary fellow of King's College London, he was knighted in 2002. As a keynote speaker at the festival, Sir Max will be discussing the tragedies and controversies of the Vietnam War.



## KEYNOTE SPEAKER: DAMIEN LEWIS

For two decades Damien Lewis worked as a war and conflict reporter for major broadcasters, reporting from across Africa, South America, the Middle and Far East, during which time he won numerous awards for his journalism. In 2003 he wrote his first book about elite military operations, *Operation Certain Death*, which was a Sunday Times top ten bestseller. Lewis's elite forces books *Bloody Heroes* and *Fire Strike 7/9* were Sunday Times top ten bestsellers, and his most recent in that genre, *Zero Six Bravo*, was a Sunday Times number one bestseller. At Malvern he will be giving a talk on his book *SAS: Ghost Patrol*.





The Battle of Tenochtitlan and the Spanish conquest of the Aztec Empire decisively changed the course of world history in 1521

Knighted in 2013 for public and political service, Sir Tony Robinson is a long-standing advocate of history and is the recipient of many awards and honorary degrees

# BATTLES THAT CHANGED HISTORY

## AN INTERVIEW WITH SIR TONY ROBINSON

The prolific luminary of *Blackadder* and *Time Team* discusses warfare, military history documentaries and the remembrance of WWI

WORDS TOM GARNER

**T**ony Robinson is an award-winning writer, presenter and actor who is the UK's foremost face of popular history. His highly varied career and long-standing interest in history has helped to popularise the subject for decades.

He has now written the foreword to DK's new book, *Battles That Changed History: An Illustrated Guide To The World's Most Famous Battles From Antiquity To The Cold War And Beyond*. To coincide with the publication, he discussed with us the importance of military history, how it is commonly presented on television and in media, and the centenary of the end of World War I.

## THE IMPACT OF WARFARE ON THE WORLD

### To what extent do battles change history?

It's always a moot point about how things are changed in history. We always have this notion of 'causation': that one event occurs and then everything else must happen. For example, if Franz Ferdinand had worn a bulletproof jacket then World War I wouldn't have happened.

Nevertheless, the reality is that an awful lot of nations are made out of wars in general and battles in particular. It is clearly true that battles shaped empires, and it's also true that the enmities created by them last for centuries. Clearly there are lots of battles that do change everything.

The Battle of Tenochtitlan meant that virtually the whole of Central and South America was soon speaking Spanish. The explosion of Spanish occupation came from that one battle. The American War of Independence and their civil war also clearly changed history. What would have happened if the sweep of the Mongols didn't end or if the Moors hadn't been stopped by Charles Martel in France? We don't know, but what there is no point in arguing is that battles 'don't' change history.

Battles take place in a very short timeframe so they give a real snapshot of what is happening in terms of culture, local relations, weaponry, uniforms and politics of course. You can also get a sense of what is happening economically, which is evident in spades during World War II.

It is also fascinating how engineering and mechanics improve because of war, and the speed with which manufacturers tend to accelerate because of conflict. I don't think that's an argument for having a war, but I do think it's a very interesting by-product.

### What can readers expect from 'Battles That Changed History'?

It does a really good job of highlighting all those battles that we probably know by name and maybe know one thing about. However, we might not know where, who, why and what they were about or what the strategy was.

For somebody like me who is an interested amateur, it is certainly very useful to be able to access that information so quickly and coherently. For me, context is all, so I get very irritated when it is missing. You can't see or understand anything unless you realise the environment of the political machinations and the passions that were around that led to a particular war or battle.

The other thing is that the artwork and layout is really superior. From trawling through the various drawings, paintings, photographs and objects of the time, I think you really capture a sense of what was going on during the times of those battles.

### Of all the battles featured in the book, which ones stand out for you?

Oddly, the ones that I was most intrigued by were the ones that I knew the least about or there were things about them that I didn't know before. For example, I never realised that the last time two British kings fought in battle was at the Battle of the Boyne, with William III and James II. I think that's a great piece of pub talk!

Also, battles like Blenheim were hugely important. There would also be no Winston Churchill if John Churchill hadn't become duke of Marlborough. It puzzles me that there are wars like the War of the Spanish Succession, which were so fundamental at the time and changed an awful lot, but that were forgotten so quickly.

### Is there any battle or period of military history that you feel has been generally neglected or that people should know more about?

It's extraordinary that even now we know so little about the Korean War, which was so fundamental to what's happening now in Asia. This was a war where I could have had an older brother that fought in it and yet it's lost to the memory. I bet you that most of the people who have been laughing at Kim Jong-un and Donald Trump have no idea what a brief time ago it was that we were fighting there.

As a television-maker it frustrates me that I have to make programme after programme about the Viking invasions, the Battle of Hastings, World War I and World War II. It's as though that is all there was in British history and indeed in British military sacrifice. However, there are things like the Peninsular War and the Battle of New Orleans and no one knows what you're talking about, including myself. I wouldn't know about them unless I'm encouraged to look.

### To what extent has military history coincided with your general interest in history?

I think that it's only been in my latter years that I've begun to look at war more closely. I think I'm very much a product of my time and generation. The only wars that I really knew about were the British imperial wars of the 19th century, the two world wars and the Cold War. As far as I was concerned, there were 'futile' wars, wars that were a 'bitter necessity', and then wars that must never be allowed to happen.

*Right: Despite its significance, the Korean War has been sorely neglected in the popular memory, particularly in the light of today's geopolitical crises*

## “NOBODY UNDER THE AGE OF 40-ISH REALLY UNDERSTANDS THAT EUROPE UNITED AFTER THE WAR IN ORDER TO PREVENT WARFARE TAKING PLACE WITHIN EUROPE”

I don't really think I scrutinised warfare in anything other than a childlike way, and I'm not sure why but maybe it's a product of age. However, I have become more interested in the causes of war, war itself and the aftermath. It's that overarching narrative that I find constantly fascinating.

### How valuable is warfare as a warning from history, and what lessons should we learn from it?

We do miss out on an awful lot of our history by failing to address the wars that took place. It's so sanitary, and I particularly feel that now. My parents' generation experienced war and it was a change-making experience in their young lives, so they understood its threat. They understood why treaties and politics were so important in order to head off war, and the reality is that there hasn't been a major war fought within our borders, or indeed close by, since 1945. I think there is a danger that we forget how close it could be to home.

One of the things that really irritates me is that, regardless of what side you join on the Brexit debate, nobody under the age of 40-ish really understands that Europe united after the war in order to prevent warfare taking place within Europe. By and large that has been successful, but then you look at Trump. He clearly has no time for NATO and Vladimir Putin is really keen on expansion, which might even include the Baltic states. These could be very



dangerous times, and I think it's very important that we have that at the front of our minds when we make our decision. We're not always going to be a cosy little social-democratic country with no threats to us.

**TV AND REMEMBERING WWI**

*How easy was it to excavate battlefields on Channel 4's Time Team?*

It's very difficult to excavate battlefields, and what archaeologists are always drumming into me is that you can't 'dig history' in archaeology. It just doesn't work like that, and that's true in spades on most battle sites.

After a battle there is an awful lot of heavy metal around that people don't want. They'll also want to forget the battle, so they'll often cultivate or build on it as quickly as possible. However, the obverse of that is true of so many of the Flanders battle sites of WWI. It speaks volumes of the amount of hardware that there was in those battles that you only have to take two steps and you've found something chunky and old that was clearly from one of the major battles.

*Several of your TV documentaries have focussed on World War I. What is it about that conflict that still resonates 100 years after it ended?*

There are lots of other battles that I would like to make television programmes

about. The problem is that the television commissioners aren't interested. You can say the 'War of the Spanish Succession' and their eyes glaze over, even though the narratives you could tell are absolutely captivating.

Why is WWI still so 'popular'? It actually wasn't 15-20 years ago. I remember I had a lot of conversations with people who said, "The memory of that war will die when the last living witnesses have passed away." In fact the opposite has happened. Whether it's due to the Channel Tunnel and how easy it is to get coaches of children over to the battlefields, or whether there is something much more significant than that I'm not sure.

I do know that for me, although I only knew him late in life, my grandfather came home from the trenches in 1918. Like so many soldiers of the time he burned his uniform on the parlour fire and never spoke of the war ever again – he refused to. The fact that somebody in your family has done that inevitably makes you much more curious about it.

*To what extent do you think Blackadder Goes Forth influenced popular perceptions of the war?*

I'm the last person to be able to answer that because I'm so close to it. I do know that it's included in the syllabus in a lot of schools in order to raise awareness of WWI, and I'm terribly proud that it's considered that important.

*Did you ever get any feedback from WWI veterans about Blackadder Goes Forth?*

We were concerned about the veterans, and that's why we made the last episode in the way

that we did. We wanted to make it absolutely clear that we weren't taking the mickey out of those who had died. We were taking the mickey out of the madness that led to them dying.

However, we knew we would have to take it on the chin if people who were close to the First World War didn't like it. In fact the opposite happened. I don't remember one single adverse criticism of the programme from somebody who was involved in the war, and that was wonderful. They were pleased that the memory had remained and they loved the way we tackled it.

*There are many events this year to commemorate the end of WWI. Considering the passage of time, what can today's generation learn from it, and how should it be commemorated in the future?*

As far as commemoration is concerned, I think we are at a rather good time. We're learning much better ways of commemorating, rather than simply visiting an austere stone pinnacle in a town or village with the names of the dead on it.

I think new generations are finding more creative ways of remembering that war, particularly if you go to Thiepval [Memorial] and see all the little notes that are pushed in the mortar between the bricks. These are from people who are remembering their great-grandfather or just remembering somebody from a history book or from their hometown. I find that very moving. We are beginning to find much more organic ways of remembering rather than institutional ones, and I love that.

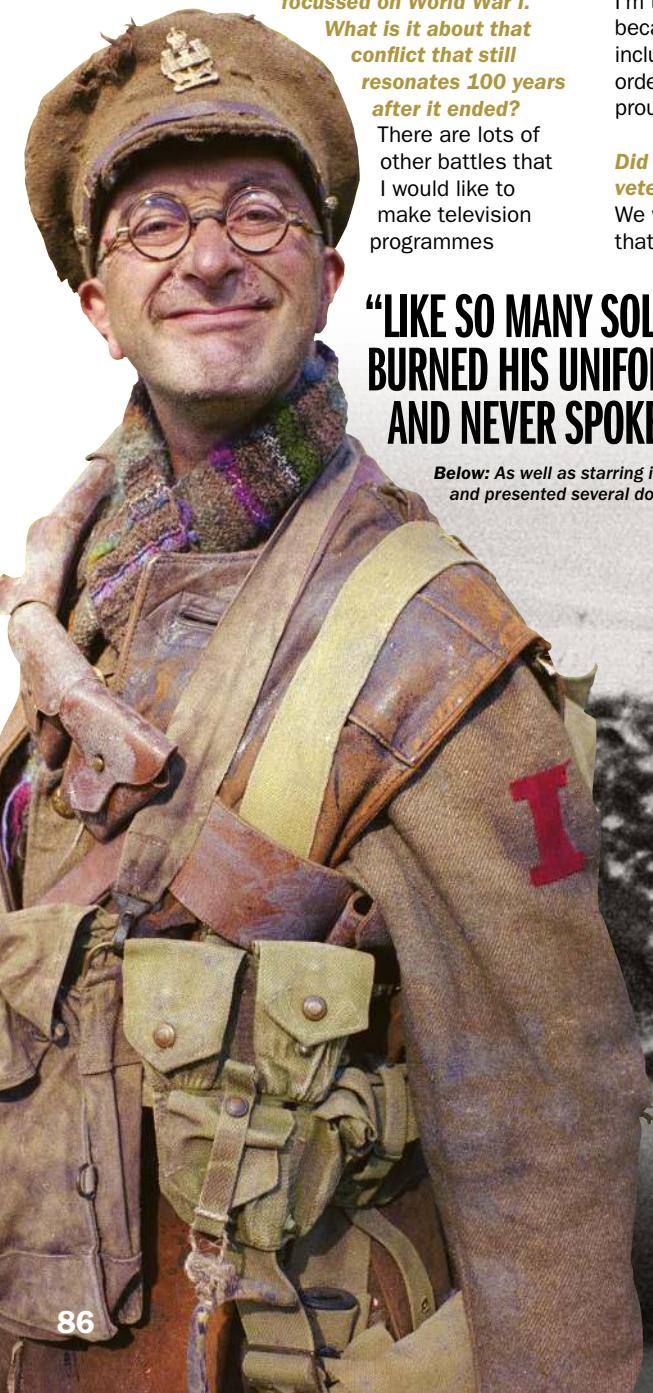
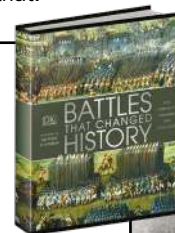
**“LIKE SO MANY SOLDIERS OF THE TIME HE BURNED HIS UNIFORM ON THE PARLOUR FIRE AND NEVER SPOKE OF THE WAR EVER AGAIN”**

*Below: As well as starring in 'Blackadder Goes Forth', Robinson has produced and presented several documentaries about World War I*

**BATTLES THAT CHANGED HISTORY**

*Battles That Changed History* is published by DK and will be on sale on 11 September 2018.

For more information visit: [www.dk.com](http://www.dk.com)



*Left: Robinson starred as Private S. Baldrick in the BBC comedy series 'Blackadder Goes Forth' in 1989. The series was highly acclaimed for its witty but poignant satire of WWI*

*Images: Alamy, Getty*

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# MUSEUMS & EVENTS

Discover castles, battles & exhibits in England, including Kent's greatest fortress, a bloody 17th-century battlefield & a sail from HMS Victory



Dover Castle is one of the best-preserved fortresses in Britain, lying above and below ground

## DOVER CASTLE THE FORMIDABLE CITADEL OF ENGLAND'S MOST FAMOUS PORT HAS A HISTORY THAT DATES FROM CLAUDIUS TO CHURCHILL

Planted firmly above the famous White Cliffs, Dover Castle is one of the United Kingdom's most iconic fortresses and has been the 'key to England' for centuries. It is arguably the most varied and sprawling castle in the country, and its history is unparalleled.

There has been a military presence at Dover since the Iron Age, and there is one of the best-preserved Roman lighthouses in Europe within the castle's grounds. The present castle dates from the 1180s and was subjected to two medieval sieges, as well as hosting several kings and queens. Unusually for a British castle, the fortress was expanded in the 18th and 19th centuries when a network of tunnels was dug into the White Cliffs to be used as barracks. Even more remarkably, the tunnels were extensively used during WWII when they acted as a command centre to control naval operations in the English Channel. It was from Dover that Vice Admiral Bertram Ramsay organised 'Operation Dynamo' in 1940, which was the famous evacuation of Allied troops from Dunkirk.

With an important history that stretches from antiquity to living memory, Dover is a must-see attraction for history enthusiasts, and the castle makes for a memorable visit thanks

to its high state of preservation. The site is rich in medieval buildings and displays, from the Anglo-Saxon church of St Mary-in-Castro, winding tunnels that were built during and after the siege of 1216, and also the majority of the castle's fortifications. The Great Tower is the fortress's centrepiece and contains a recreated royal chamber on the second floor, which is decorated to evoke a 12th-century palace.

The castle's World War II history is also well represented, particularly with its wartime tunnels. 'Operation Dynamo: Rescue from Dunkirk' is a treasure trove where visitors can go on guided tours and experience state-of-the-art special effects, dramatic projections, film footage and testimonies that bring the period to life. The 1941 underground military hospital is also open to the public, and above ground there is the preserved fire command post that was first constructed during World War I.

Dover Castle is open throughout the year and holds regular events. Some of the upcoming military-themed events include 'WWII Christmas at Dover Castle', which runs from 1-17 December 2018 on weekends, and 'Secrets and Spies at Dover Castle', which will be happening between 18-22 February 2019.

The castle contains a network of tunnels that range from the Middle Ages through to the Napoleonic Wars, and was used extensively during WWII



Images: Getty, Battle of Sedgemoor Visitor Centre, Portsmouth Historic Dockyard



FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: [WWW.ENGLISH-HERITAGE.ORG.UK/VISIT/PLACES/DOVER-CASTLE](http://WWW.ENGLISH-HERITAGE.ORG.UK/VISIT/PLACES/DOVER-CASTLE)



# BATTLE OF SEDGEMOOR VISITOR CENTRE

EXPLORE THE STORY OF THE FAILED MONMOUTH REBELLION IN A MEDIEVAL SOMERSET CHURCH

The Battle of Sedgemoor was fought on 6 July 1685 in Somerset and was the last engagement of the Monmouth Rebellion. James Scott, Duke of Monmouth was the illegitimate son of Charles II but still believed he had a right to the throne and attempted to seize the crown from his uncle James II. The rebellion soon faltered, and Sedgemoor was the last pitched battle fought on English soil. Monmouth was defeated, captured and executed, while many of his supporters were tried in the notorious 'Bloody Assizes', which was overseen by the infamous Judge Jeffreys.

For anybody visiting Somerset with an interest in military or royal history, the Battle of Sedgemoor Visitor Centre is a small but

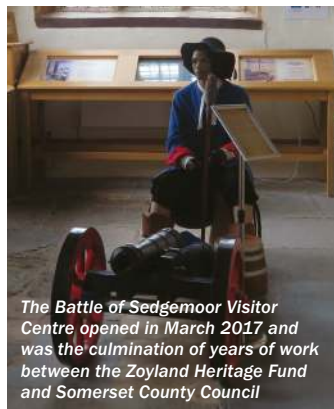
fascinating venue with free admission. It is located in the village of Westonzoyleland inside the 13th-century church of St Mary's, which is near the battlefield. Accounts of the battle from 1685 were recorded in the parish register and churchwarden's account book, so the church is an ideal location to tell the battle's story.

There are graphic displays, touch screens and wall-mounted videos that tell the complete story of Sedgemoor, as well as static displays of costumes and weapons. The visitor centre is open during normal church hours and can be made available to larger groups by appointment only.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: [WWW.ZOYLANDHERITAGE.CO.UK](http://WWW.ZOYLANDHERITAGE.CO.UK)**



Examples of late 17th-century weapons include muskets and pistols



The Battle of Sedgemoor Visitor Centre opened in March 2017 and was the culmination of years of work between the Zoyland Heritage Fund and Somerset County Council



Re-created period costumes form part of the exhibition, including an early example of the English redcoat

# HMS VICTORY TRAFALGAR SAIL

THIS LARGE BUT FRAGILE ARTEFACT FROM LORD NELSON'S ICONIC SHIP AND BATTLE IS NOW ON DISPLAY IN PORTSMOUTH

Although it has not been seen for six years, Portsmouth Historic Dockyard is displaying the 'Trafalgar Sail' for a limited period. Measuring 24 metres (79 feet) at the foot, 16 metres (52 feet) at the head and covering an area of 1,102 metres (3,615 feet), this iconic sail is the only surviving fore-topsail from HMS Victory and was used at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805.



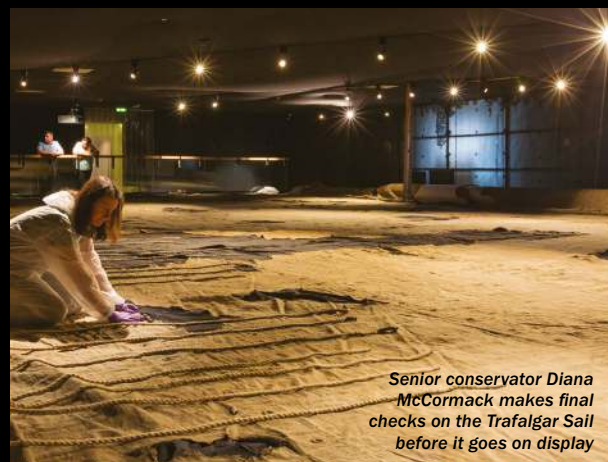
Such is the sail's size that it covers the equivalent of two tennis courts when it is fully laid out and is pockmarked with 90 shot holes. It has had a chequered display history over the last 200 years and is in a very delicate condition. Now temporarily displayed at Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, the sail is laid flat and accompanied by a short audio and lighting presentation featuring footage from the Oscar-winning film *Master And Commander: The Far Side Of The World*.

Matthew Sheldon, director of heritage at the National Museum of the Royal Navy, says, "HMS Victory, Nelson and the Battle of Trafalgar are key to our history. The sail is an amazing object, scarred by battle and, like HMS Victory herself, a proud survivor of an iconic battle. But it is also a vast, handmade object from Georgian times that required great knowledge and skill to create it. Seeing it is a real treat."

Commissioned in 1778, HMS Victory is still on active service as the oldest commissioned warship in the world. It is preserved in a dry dock at Portsmouth Historic Dockyard



The Trafalgar Sail is accompanied by audio and visual footage from 'Master And Commander'. Actor Russell Crowe visited HMS Victory as part of his research for the film, set during the Napoleonic Wars



Senior conservator Diana McCormack makes final checks on the Trafalgar Sail before it goes on display

**FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: [WWW.HISTORICDOCKYARD.CO.UK](http://WWW.HISTORICDOCKYARD.CO.UK)**



IF YOU WOULD LIKE YOUR FAVOURITE MILITARY HISTORY MUSEUM OR HERITAGE ATTRACTION MENTIONED IN THE MAGAZINE, MESSAGE US VIA FACEBOOK OR TWITTER

## REVIEWS

Our pick of the latest military history books to hit the shelves

## FALLOUT

THE STORY OF THE "LIES, PRETENCES AND DECEPTIONS" THAT DRAGGED THE WORLD INTO THE NUCLEAR AGE

**Author:** Peter Watson **Price:** £25.00

**Publisher:** Public Affairs **Released:** Out now

In a single moment on the morning of 6 August 1945, an event changed forever the course of warfare. For eight months, the USA and Britain had worked in the utmost secrecy to build the most devastating killing machine the world had ever known. It was intended to be used against the Nazis, but that regime's collapse in May 1945 obviated the need to drop an atomic bomb on Germany. Instead, Japan became the target of what has become one of military history's most controversial decisions. The first bomb was detonated over Hiroshima and the second was dropped on Nagasaki, killing a total of 129,000 people, most of whom were civilians.

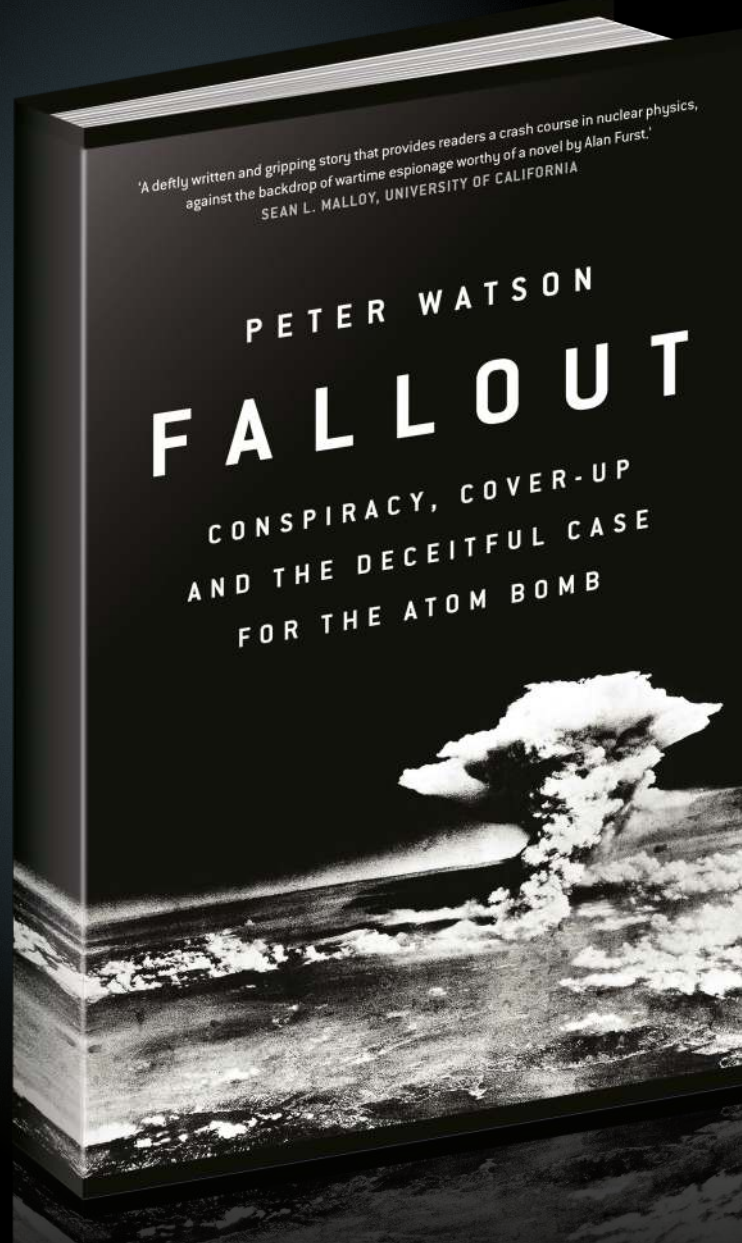
Journalist and historian Peter Watson recounts in his fascinating and meticulously researched narrative the making of the atomic bomb. He argues that it was an unnecessary weapon whose nature politicians failed to understand. The book is essentially about the history of atomic bomb wartime intelligence, drawing the conclusion that a series of momentous mistakes and lies took the world stumbling into the nuclear age.

The bomb, Watson writes, came about as the result of a series of "lies, pretences and deceptions" between the Allies, all of which brought into being the most dangerous killing machine in history. Two scientists, the Danish Nobel Prize recipient Niels Bohr and the German Klaus Fuchs, occupy the heart of this tale. Both worked on the Manhattan Project, the US research and development project that produced the bomb. Both also advocated sharing nuclear weapon technology with Stalin. The difference was that Bohr worked honestly for the British war effort, while Fuchs was an active Soviet agent, who was later convicted of passing information about the Manhattan Project to the Kremlin.

Watson's focus is on the early years of the war, when fears ran through London and Washington, DC that Hitler's scientists were developing a nuclear weapon. It was discovered that these fears were unfounded, yet this intelligence was covered up by politicians who later took the decision to use the new weapon. The author contends that the bomb need never have been built, nor the world thrust into the threatening and precarious balancing act that it still inhabits. "Errors were made, and lies were told, to bring us a weapon that was not needed," he writes.

The spectre of a nuclear conflict has so far been forestalled, ironically thanks largely to Fuchs having leaked information to the Soviets. This, Watson states, speeded up the production of Russia's nuclear program, so that by the time of the Korean War, the first East-West conflict of the nuclear age, the US saw fit to refrain from using this deadly weapon against an equally armed adversary.

Watson acknowledges that Fuchs betrayed his colleagues as well as Britain, which had provided sanctuary when he fled the Nazis. The author then makes the intriguing point that it was precisely Fuchs's treachery and cunning that in the end propelled the world into its tableau of terror of nuclear warfare, and in doing so saved us from disaster.



**"THE BOOK IS ESSENTIALLY ABOUT THE HISTORY OF ATOMIC BOMB WARTIME INTELLIGENCE, DRAWING THE CONCLUSION THAT A SERIES OF MOMENTOUS MISTAKES AND LIES TOOK THE WORLD STUMBLING INTO THE NUCLEAR AGE"**

Nevertheless, we live with the relentless spectre of nuclear devastation. Sabre-rattling against Iran and North Korea as potential nuclear aggressors carries the peril of igniting a nuclear showdown or pre-emptive strike – and this from the only country that has ever used the bomb against an enemy.

# PARTITION

ERRORS AND MISSED OPPORTUNITIES DURING THE PARTITION OF INDIA

**Author:** Barney White-Spunner

**Publisher:** Simon & Schuster **Price:** £10.99

Barney White-Spunner brings a unique set of credentials to a subject that traditionally has been the preserve of academics and historians – narrators too often carrying a personal axe to grind. The author has commanded British and allied troops at every level, in the Balkans, Iraq, Africa and Asia. As a soldier and military historian, White-Spunner explains that he has written this book “from a soldier’s perspective”.

White-Spunner’s objective is to explore the thinking of and pressures on the politicians, administrators and soldiers of nearly 70 years ago, as well as the effects their subsequent actions had on the people of the Indian subcontinent.

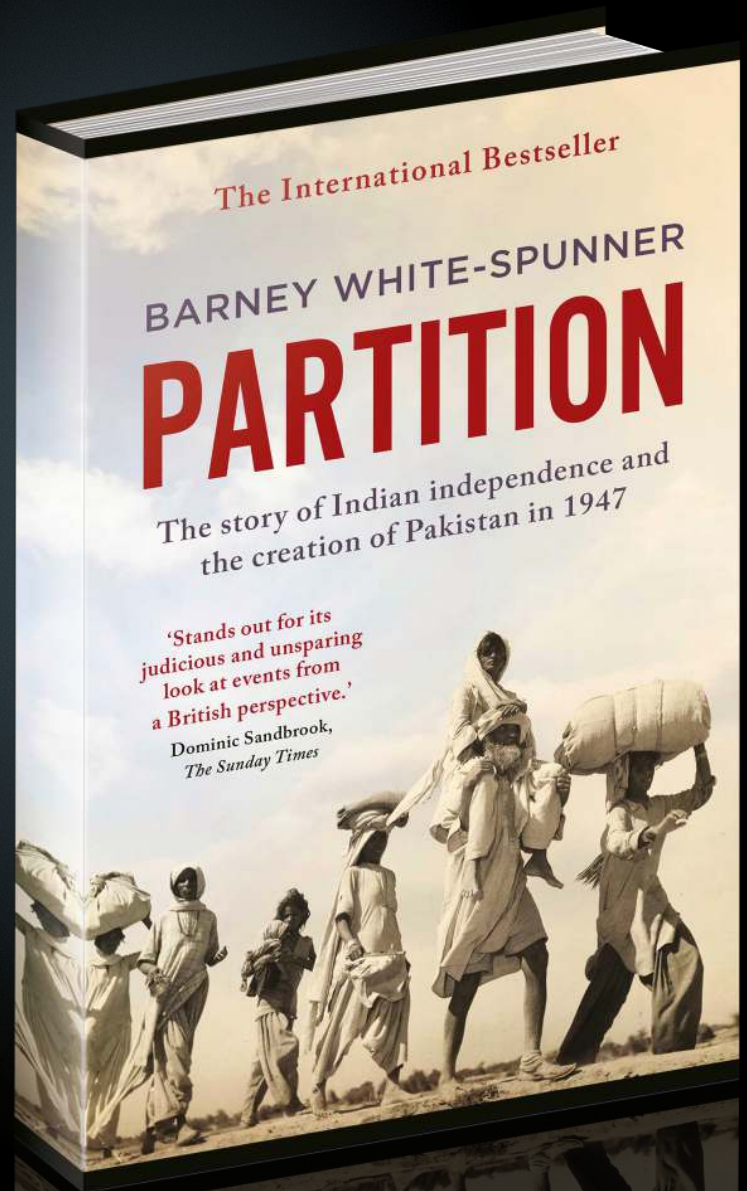
The implementation of Partition and its aftermath is graphically illustrated by the nearly 1 million dead as a result of sectarian violence, three Indo-Pakistani wars, waves of terrorism and polarisation around the Cold War powers. The book could not have appeared at a more timely moment: the wounds inflicted by this single event in August 1947 cut so deep that today we find India threatening to strip 4 million people of citizenship in Assam. The Hindu nationalist government of Narendra Modi alleges that these people came to India after the 1971 war in which Bangladesh emerged as an independent state. Modi claims this initiative is necessary to identify illegal Bangladeshi immigrants, but it is regarded by more than a few as a witch-hunt against Muslims.

For his month-by-month account of the events leading up to the Partition of India, the author has drawn on a wide range of research work, official documents, letters, diaries and interviews. White-Spunner maintains a measured and balanced tone throughout his tale of bitter division and exploitation, clashes of personality, incompetence and missed or unseen opportunities. He is adamant in his belief that much of the tragedy of Partition, in particular the enormous loss of civilian life, could have been reduced had more extensive use been made of the British and British Indian armies in the Punjab.

“It could have ended so much better, as with British involvement in other parts of the globe,” the author says, “had it ended when it should have done, when the age of empire was demonstrably over and when subject peoples were demanding self-government.” He writes that Britain stayed on too long – a persuasive though of course unverifiable affirmation.

What is certain is the viceroy’s determination to exit in all haste. Louis Mountbatten was convinced that only Partition could avert full-scale civil war. In April 1947 he sent a report to Prime Minister Clement Attlee warning that India was engulfed in communal riots and on the brink of civil war. “I am convinced,” Mountbatten said, “that a fairly quick decision would appear to be the only way to convert the Indian minds from their present emotionalism to stark realism to counter the disastrous spread of strife.”

**Below, left to right:** Refugees crowd onto trains, Lord Mountbatten visits the Punjab following riots, and a train filled with refugees heads to the newly created Pakistan



**“AS A SOLDIER AND MILITARY HISTORIAN, WHITE-SPUNNER EXPLAINS THAT HE HAS WRITTEN THIS BOOK “FROM A SOLDIER’S PERSPECTIVE”**

Consequently, the viceroy announced that Indians would get their independence on 15 August 1947. The time was subsequently moved to midnight on the more auspicious 14 August, to satisfy astrologers fearful of the malign conjunction of Saturn, Jupiter and Venus. Mountbatten believed that speed was essential to save India from complete breakdown, but as this book shows, this is what actually helped to precipitate a holocaust.



# THE RESTLESS KINGS

## HENRY II, HIS SONS & THE WARS FOR THE PLANTAGENET CROWN

A THOROUGH & READABLE ACCOUNT OF THE MOST DYSFUNCTIONAL ROYAL FAMILY IN ENGLISH HISTORY

Author: Nick Barratt Publisher: Faber & Faber Price: £20.00

Henry II. Eleanor of Aquitaine. Richard the Lionheart. Thomas Becket. John Lackland. They are among the most vivid personalities in English history, capable of inspiring scholarly battles and great art in mediums not even invented when they were alive nine centuries later. This new history is a welcome prospect, running from the Anarchy, when Matilda, Henry's mother, and Henry's cousin Stephen dragged England and Normandy into civil war, through Henry's own tumultuous reign – which included the murder of his archbishop, Thomas Becket, and insurrections led, in turn, by all his four sons. The narrative concludes with the reigns of Henry's sons, Richard – who led a life of such high adventure that it would seem wildly improbable in a novel – and John – who unwittingly laid the foundations for the rule of law in England when he signed the Magna Carta. This is the sort of history to drag people away from social media.

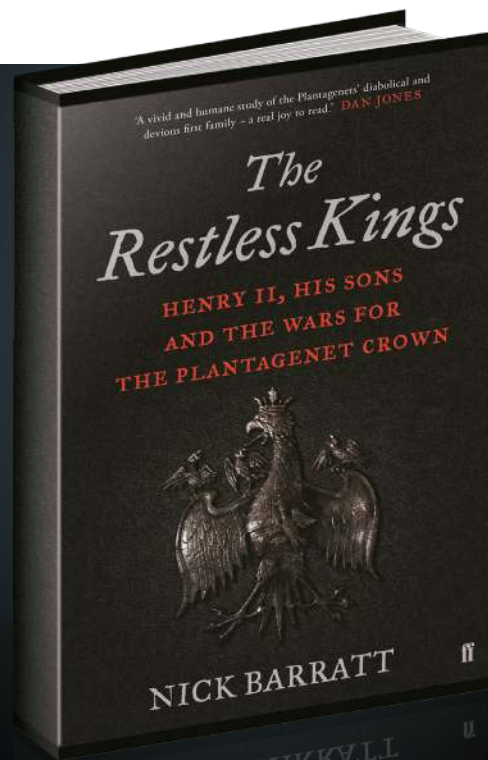
What Barratt does, and does extremely well, is tell the story of these warring generations, and the constant shiftings of fortune and opportunity that raised them up and brought them low. So for a concise, grounded account of the rise and fall of the Angevin Empire, and the beginnings of an England that defined itself

against its rival across the English Channel, this book is ideal.

However, the characters never quite come alive. This is subjective, involving the mysterious alchemy of words, experience and memory that makes every engagement with the written word unique to the particular person and book. It may be that the book's sweep is too broad – after all, whole books have been written about particular episodes in the lives of these people – but this reviewer found *The Restless Kings* just a bit dull.

Dull should never be a word uttered anywhere near Henry or Eleanor, let alone their progeny. How did Barratt achieve this opposite of literary alchemy, and turn historical gold not quite into lead, but maybe into slightly tarnished silver?

This is certainly not a bad book: the story (and it is a complex story running over three generations) is told clearly, and Barratt's judgements are sound and reasonable. His balanced account of the death of Becket nicely eschews the partisanship of the scholarly reassessment that turned the 19th-century martyr into the 20th-century politician, viewing the confrontation between Becket and Henry as the tragic result of their personalities and roles. However, Barratt never quite manages to make the personalities of these larger-than-life



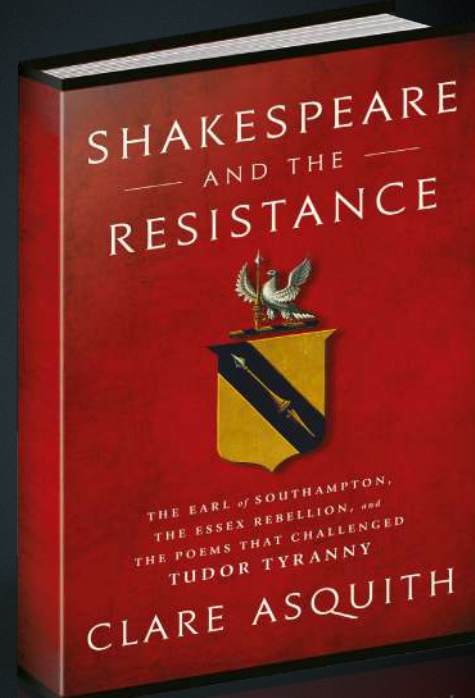
people, who bestrode Europe with the sort of flamboyance that puts today's stars into dull relief, spark into life.

There are hints: when he quotes the lament of Henry on the death of his first-born son, who had twice rebelled against him: "He cost me much, but I wish he had lived to cost me more." Or the warning King Philip of France sent to John that their mutual enemy, John's brother Richard, was going to be released from his captivity: "Look to yourself; the devil is loose." But these sparks sputter out on the page, never quite igniting into the sort of characters that leap out of the pages of the book and into the imagination.

# SHAKESPEARE AND THE RESISTANCE

A BOOK THAT CHALLENGES FIVE CENTURIES OF TUDOR PROPAGANDA WHILE UNLOCKING THE MOST MYSTERIOUS POEMS IN THE SHAKESPEARE CANON

Author: Clare Asquith Publisher: Public Affairs Price: £22



Read all about it, read all about it: shocking exposé on the Tudor regime and the far-reaching effects of Henry VIII's Act of Supremacy. This book demonstrates the effect of the Act of Supremacy on England's subjects and how the progeny of Henry VIII continued to exploit its powers for their own gains at the expense of the very people they had pledged to help. Asquith is no Catholic apologist grinding a particular axe but, through rigorous research, shows that Elizabethan England, far from being the 'sceptred isle' where all is well, was a police state where to think other than the way of the crown would invite penury or the death sentence. These lines from Richard II would have had Elizabethan audiences nodding in agreement: "the precious stone set in the silver

sea... is now bound in with shame, with inky blots and rotten parchment bonds."

Horror, and protest against the actions of the queen and her privy council, led by the smooth-talking spin-doctor Lord Burghley, could only be expressed in deeply disguised allegory. Poets such as Dryden, Spenser, Donne and Shakespeare were master craftsman of veiled criticism. *The Rape Of Lucrece*, the impenetrable and today mostly unread narrative poem of Shakespeare, was a Tudor hit, with copies so well-thumbed that they fell apart. Asquith with meticulous historical research lays open its meaning.

It is a shocking read. The misinformation and propaganda of the Tudor regime still holds us in its fist. This book will change that.

**"THE PROGENY OF HENRY VIII CONTINUED TO EXPLOIT ITS POWERS FOR THEIR OWN GAINS AT THE EXPENSE OF THE VERY PEOPLE THEY HAD PLEDGED TO HELP"**

# SOLDIERS OF A DIFFERENT GOD

A CURIOUS ADDITION TO AN ESTABLISHED & ENTERTAINING RANGE OF BOOKS

**Author:** Christopher Othen **Publisher:** Amberley Publishing  
**Price:** £18.99

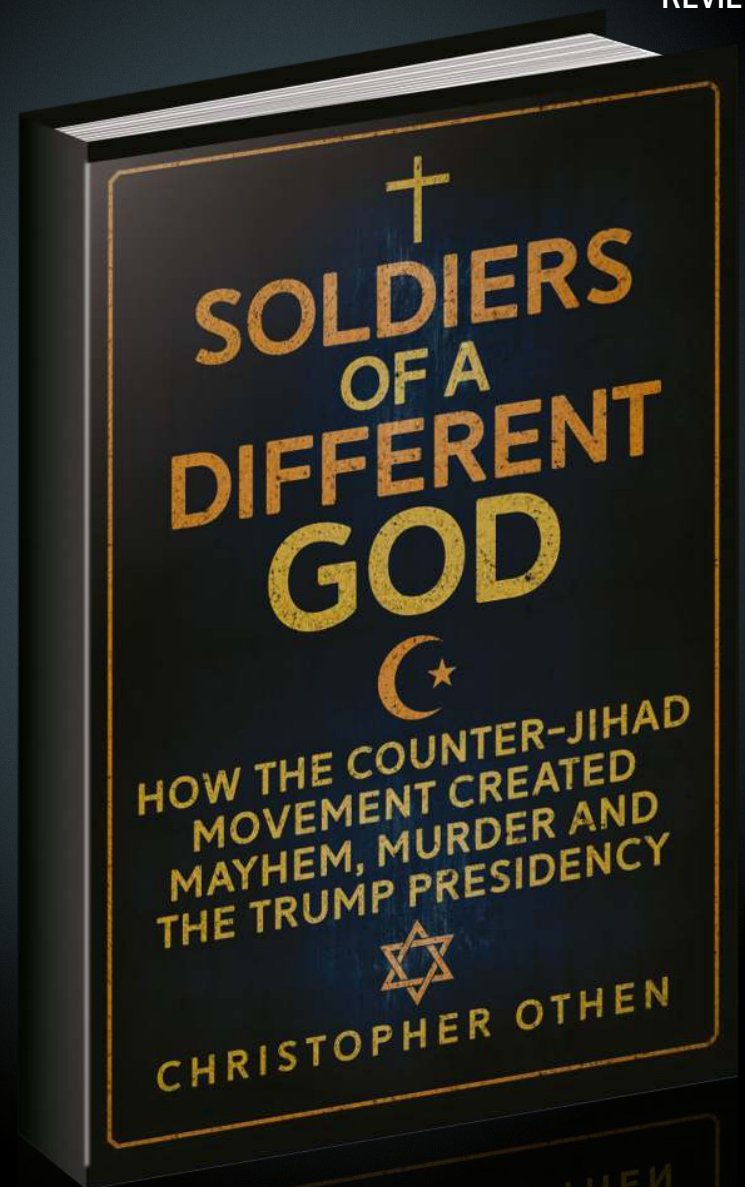
The glut of books analysing and expounding on the post-9/11 jihadist phenomenon verges on the limitless. Here is something different. In this work Christopher Othen takes on the task of explaining the other side of the coin, summed up in the pithy subtitle “How the counter-jihadist movement created mayhem, murder and the Trump presidency”, a sentence that cries out: now read on.

Journalist and author Othen brings a unique set of credentials to his subject. In his own words, he has “interviewed retired mercenaries about African wars, discussed lost causes with political extremists and got drunk with an ex-mujahidin who knew Osama bin Laden”. In a chatty and bouncy narrative, the author begins his tale with “a clash of civilisations in New York”, the day of the September 2001 attack on the Twin Towers that kicked off the West’s chaotic war on terror. From that horrific morning to the present day, it is possible to trace a 15-year timeline culminating in the 2016 presidency: “Donald Trump,” the author writes, “would face off against Hillary Clinton with a campaign promise to stop Muslim immigration that had the counter-jihad cheering”.

This was the crescendo of a series of knee-jerk reactions that largely played into jihadist hands. Trump was elected on a platform of populist nationalism. One of his first acts was a travel ban on citizens of six Muslim countries. “The counter-jihad world celebrated,” Othen says. Since 9/11, however, there have been more than 500 killed and injured in terrorist attacks in the US, none of them committed by illegal Muslim immigrants. At the same time, the country has spent some \$1 trillion to defend itself against jihadism. In this same period, the death toll in Europe numbered in excess of 660 people.

One has to ask whether our democracies are so fragile that we compel ourselves to spend such astronomical sums on counter-terrorism, and does this not render us victims of bear-baiting? Likewise, is this really the most effective way to combat an enemy that resembles the mythological Greek Hydra, which grew two new heads each time one was chopped off?

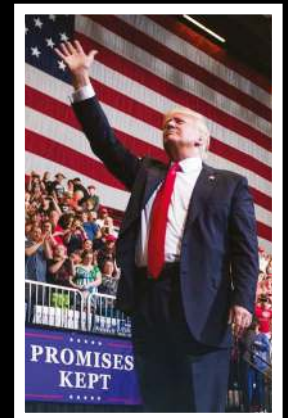
The book sheds light on strange events, such as the 2007 Counter-Jihad Conference in Brussels that brought activists face to face with mentors like Bat Ye’or, the mysterious Jewish-Egyptian ideologue who provided ammunition for journalists like Oriana Fallaci and Melanie Phillips, who were warning about the dangers of radical Islam. The gathering was called to create a European network of activists from 14 nations to resist the increasing Islamisation of their countries. The outcome took on an



uncomfortable air of the surreal when British conference attendees linked up with football hooligans to form the English Defence League.

Othen maintains that the future of the counter-jihad is uncertain but that it will likely end up a patch on a nationalist quilt, not a whole cloth. The future for the West in its relations with Islam is equally uncertain. The most hopeful sign is that the collapse of the so-called Islamic State has slowed terror attacks and disillusioned many radicalised Muslims around the world. It remains to be seen if what we are witnessing is a lull while these merchants of death regroup and hone their strategy, or if their back is well and truly broken.

**Below, left to right:** Ships from five Western nations join forces for the War on Terror, members of the English Defence League, and Trump surfing a wave of nationalism



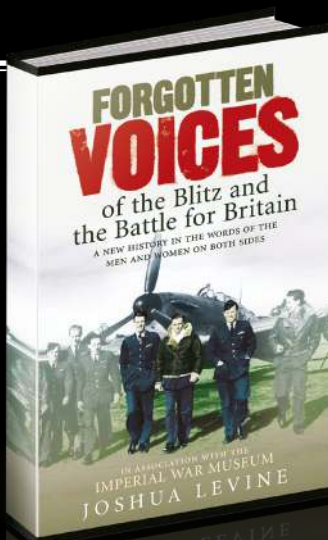
5 BEST BOOKS ON...

# THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN

NEVER IN THE HISTORY OF HUMAN CONFLICT HAS SO MUCH BEEN WRITTEN BY SO MANY ABOUT SO FEW

## Forgotten Voices Of The Blitz And The Battle of Britain *Joshua Levine*

The reader is taken on a journey through Britain's darkest days of the war in a vast ensemble of personal accounts. We meet some of the most extraordinary actors in the Battle of Britain. Pilot Flight Lieutenant Hug Ironside, for instance, voices controversial views about his Hurricane, "preferable to a Spitfire." Ironside explains that you couldn't kneel on the top of the Spitfire wing and rearm. The author also brings to life remembrances of those who served in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force. Alison Hancock recalls, "I bought a lot of Elizabeth Arden make-up and it was stolen." When she reported it to the officer in charge, the reply was, "Get out of the room and take that lipstick off!"



"WE MEET SOME OF THE MOST EXTRAORDINARY ACTORS IN THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN"



## The Battle Of Britain *James Holland*

James Holland tells this most epic of stories from a 360 degree perspective, drawing on extensive new research from around the world that challenges some long-held myths. He paints a complete picture of that extraordinary summer in 1940, when the fate of the world hung by a thread. For Britain, he says, her very survival was at stake. Holland believes the time has come to look afresh at those critical moments. He ranks 1940 in importance in British history with 1066, 1588 and 1805, when the country was imperilled as never before. We are offered a dramatic account of the Battle of Britain, but importantly Holland's research delves deep into both sides of the story in their wider context.



## Finest Hour *Tim Clayton and Phil Craig*

This account recreates the terror, the tragedy and the triumph of the Battle of Britain. The events of that month in 1940 are told through the voices, diaries, letters and memoirs of the men and women who lived, fought and died during that inspiring year. The book also contains a provocative analysis of key turning points and questions some cherished myths. Cutting through the nostalgic haze, it enables the reader to experience a time when a nation's darkest hour became its finest. The authors came to a surprising conclusion: interpreting the Battle of Britain had been cluttered by wartime propaganda. They expand on the original military and political framework to set out a new understanding of the story.



## We Remember The Battle Of Britain *Frank & Joan Shaw*

This book is filled with stories from servicemen who fought in the air and on the ground, and from the men and women who witnessed the dogfights taking place above them. From the excitement of collecting 'souvenirs' from wreckage as children, to hearing the screams of planes diving out of the sky, we learn how the Few fought off the threat of invasion. The authors recount stories of ordinary men and women who never lost confidence in their ultimate victory in a time of growing up quickly. Mary Earle of Kent recalls a German raid, "Within minutes our lives had changed and the child in me had gone, never to return."



## The Many Not The Few *Richard North*

Noted defence analyst Richard North offers a radical re-evaluation of the Battle of Britain. He dismantles the often misleading retelling of events and takes a fresh look at the conflict, to show that the civilian experience, far from being separate and distinct, was integral to the battle. This recovery of the people's history sets out to demonstrate that Hitler's aim was not the military conquest of Britain and that his unattained target was the hearts and minds of the British people. North stresses that the Battle of Britain was a people's victory, while asserting that over the years, they have been denied credit for that most important victory.

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### Contributors

Edoardo Albert, Murray Dahm, Marc DeSantis, Paul Garson,  
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### Photography

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### Advertising

Media packs are available on request  
Commercial Director **Clare Dove**

clare.dove@futurenet.com

Regional Advertising Director **Mark Wright**

mark.wright@futurenet.com

Advertising Manager **Toni Cole**

toni.cole@futurenet.com

Media Sales Executive **Jagdeep Maan**

jagdeep.maan@futurenet.com

### International

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International Licensing Director **Matt Ellis**

matt.ellis@futurenet.com

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# MEDIEVAL ARMOURED SKULL

Archaeological excavations in the early 20th century revealed the full horrors of a previously forgotten Scandinavian battle

All warfare is brutal, but medieval battles could be uniquely intense. Although bows, spears and siege weapons provided some distance, the majority of fighting was hand to hand. The Middle Ages saw centuries of intimate bloodletting, and when battlefield archaeology reveals its secrets the results can be shocking.

In July 1361 Valdemar IV, the king of Denmark, invaded Gotland, which was then a strategically important island with a diverse population of Swedes and Danes. Swedish peasants attempted to repel the invaders in battle near the city of Visby, but they were slaughtered by Danish warriors. Gotland became part of Denmark until Sweden reclaimed it in the early 15th century.

The Battle of Visby remained forgotten for centuries, until the early 20th century, when almost 1,200 individuals were discovered in

several mass graves on Gotland. The bodies were dated to 1361, and they remain the largest battlefield skeletal collection in Europe.

The excavation was unique, not just for the amount of skeletons but for the dark light they shone on the brutality of Medieval warfare. The soldiers mostly lay in random positions that indicated a haphazard and hasty burial. There was ample evidence of wounds from swords, axes and arrows, while other individuals displayed signs of crushing injuries from bludgeoning weapons.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the graves was that many of the skulls were still wearing their chain mail coifs. These linked hoods did provide some protection, but many of the blows had cut through the mail into the bone. The coifs are a rare survival because the majority of medieval battlefield casualties were stripped of anything valuable, including armour.

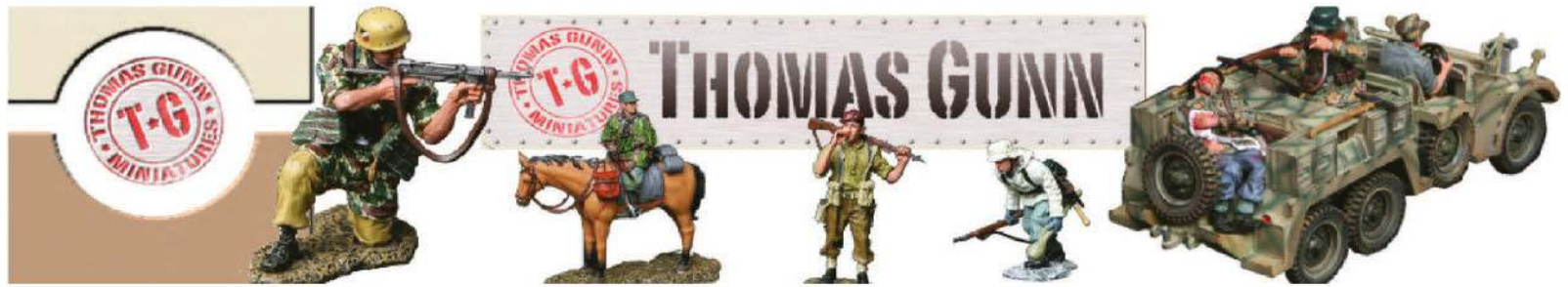
**“THE BATTLE OF VISBY REMAINED FORGOTTEN FOR CENTURIES, UNTIL THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY, WHEN ALMOST 1,200 INDIVIDUALS WERE DISCOVERED IN SEVERAL MASS GRAVES ON GOTLAND”**

*Below: A casualty of the Battle of Visby. It's thought the dead were interred still wearing their armour because the hot July weather required them to be hastily buried*



*Above: The Battle of Visby was fought within 300 metres (330 yards) of the city's fortifications. After the battle, Valdemar IV tore part of the wall down, before declaring himself 'king of Gotland'*





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# KING & COUNTRY'S

**DURING THE VIETNAM WAR** American soldiers routinely referred to the Viet Cong as 'VICTOR CHARLIE' or 'VC'. Victor and Charlie both being letters in the U.S. Military's phonetic alphabet. 'CHARLIE' itself could also mean communist forces in general, either Viet Cong or NVA (North Vietnamese Army).



VN019



VN015  
USMC M50A1  
"ONTOS"

VN016

VN014



VN028



VN024

# Victor Charlie & the ONTOS

Following the successful launch, earlier this year, of our U.S. Marines in action fighting their way into Hue during 1968's TET Offensive K&C recognized the urgent requirement to supply some opposition...

So, here is the first installment – SIX Viet Cong volunteers armed with an assortment of Chinese and Soviet bloc-made weapons including the ubiquitous AK47 and the Czech SKS rifle.

Most of our VC are dressed in loose-fitting black jackets and trousers (all the better to blend in with ordinary Vietnamese peasants) with different shades of khaki-coloured web pouches and belts for their ammunition and grenades.

Two Viet Cong casualties are also included in this release... *The NVA will be appearing soon!*

## 'SIX GUN SUZIE'

Playing a major role in battling the VC and NVA during the battle for Hue was one of the most original and unique fighting vehicles in the U.S. military's inventory – *The M50 'ONTOS'*.

Officially known as *'The Rifle, Multiple 106mm, Self-Propelled Tank'* this 'minitank' with its six barrels provided direct fire support for the Marines assaulting bunkers and houses in the narrow streets and alley-ways of Hue.

The K&C model is in USMC markings and comes complete with a *vehicle commander firing his .30 cal. machine gun*. A Marine 'loader' and 'spotter' are also available.



VN026

Together all of these VC and USMC figures and fighting vehicle continue to tell the dramatic and violent story that was the Battle of Hue.

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